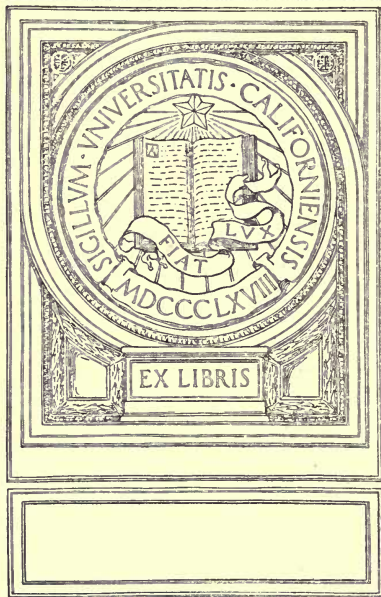


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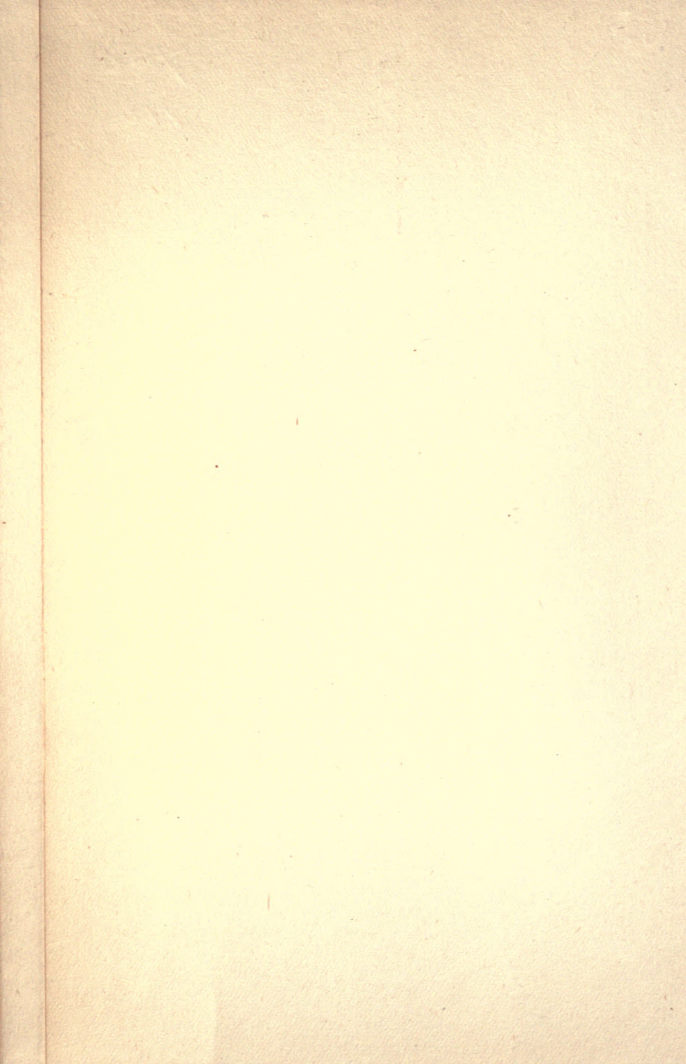
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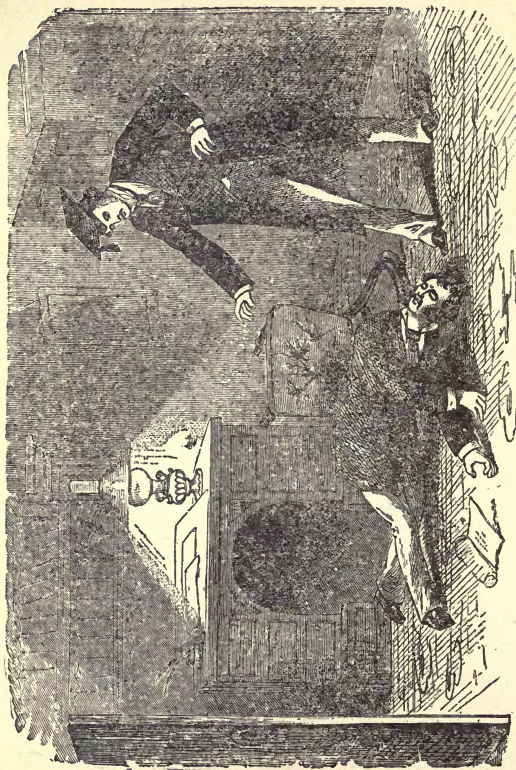
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'LYING ON THE FLOOR WAS THE BODY OF THE MANAGER.'

*Frontispiece. Oxford, ** page 46.*

JACK HARKAWAY'S STRANGE ADVENTURES AT OXFORD.

BEING THE CONCLUSION OF
"JACK HARKAWAY AT OXFORD"

BY
BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG



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JACK HARF AWAY'S STRANGE ADVENTURES AT OXFORD.

A VISIT TO THE "VAGS."

EVERYONE at Mr. Holloway's congratulated Jack upon his narrow escape.

And then somebody proposed a carpet dance which went off very well, though Jack after a quadrille pleaded a headache, and went and sat down on the sofa.

"You look gloomy, dear Jack," said Emily. "You have been working too hard. I must get Mr. Travers to let me call for you in the carriage and take you out. Why not try and get into the Oxford football eleven, which is going to play Eton on their own ground? That will be a distraction."

"I will," answered Jack. "Tell me all the news, Emmy. It is a long time since we had a chat."

"I have some news for you," she said smiling, "though it is a sad thing for Hilda."

"What has happened?"

"The Duke of Woodstock is dead."

"Dead!" repeated Jack, in astonishment.

"Yes, indeed. He was with his yacht in the Mediterranean, and was drowned while bathing. His widow is handsomely provided for, and comes home in a few days to stay at her father's."

"She will not be sorry, for she never loved him."

"No; she liked you. Don't go after the widow, Jack," said Emily, laughing.

"Is it likely? Oh, Emily, how can you say——"

"Hush!" interrupted Emily: "it was only nonsense. I am not afraid of the widow, dear."

The next day the party broke up. Jack and Harvey

were driven to Oxford by their friend Mr. Holloway, and Emily returned with Mrs. Travers to that lady's house.

Jack found Sir Sydney installed in his rooms.

"Ah, dear boy," said Sir Sydney, with a languid air. "Glad to see you. Making myself at home."

"So I perceive," answered Jack.

"Fact is, I'm getting used up," continued Sir Sydney. "I wish the dons would send me down for a year, so that I might recruit in the country."

"Have a quiet evening with me. I'm reading——"

"For goodness' sake don't talk about reading," interrupted the baronet; "I hate grinding, and never was a sap."

Turning to Monday, he added—

"My black friend, in you I recognise a man and a brother. Perform the Christian operation of giving me some B. in my S."

Monday poured a fresh quantity of brandy in the seltzer.

"I am better; let the fact be written in gold," said Sir Sydney. "I say, Harkaway—redoubtable athlete that thou art—strong man, tell me if you can make a speech?"

"Why?"

"Because to-night you must come with me to the 'Vags.'"

"And what are the 'Vags'?"

"Allow me to enlighten your darkness," replied Sir Sydney. "The 'Vags' is an institution. Certain members of the university are disgusted with the dry nature of the debates at the Union, and they have formed an anti-union society or discussion club, where everybody can quarrel to his heart's content."

"Oh, it is a debating club?" said Jack.

"Exactly. We call ourselves the 'Vagrants' or 'Vags.' Our President is your worthy friend, Mr. Mole, to whose genius we owe the origin of the society."

"Is Mole one of you?"

"Did I not say so?"

"I thought he was living in the country with his wife and children."

"So he is, but that does not prevent him feeling bored, like many other married men, and wishing to spend his evenings abroad."

At this moment Mr. Mole entered the room, rather unsteady in his gait, and looking as if he had again given way to drinking.

"Glad to see you, sir," said Harkaway. "Take a chair."

"I will take two," replied Mr. Mole, sitting down on one and putting his legs on another: "the cold weather fatigues me. Have you any of that alcoholic stimulant called brandy?"

"Certainly. Monday, attend to Mr. Mole. How's your wife, sir?"

"Awful, Harkaway," replied Mr. Mole; "as I am a Christian gentleman, a scholar, and a man of education, I declare she is beyond endurance."

"And the blessed infants, sir?"

"Name them not. If ever there were imps of darkness sent into the world to plague an unfortunate individual—but I will say no more," replied Mr. Mole with a groan.

"Don't mind Dawson, sir. He's nobody—tell us all about it."

"Why should I? Look at my expressive countenance, my grief-worn face, my locks already tinged with grey—do they not tell a tale? Were it not for the pursuits of science, I should seek the dismal doom of the demented suicide."

"What is this scientific affair you have in hand, sir? Lots of fellows have been talking about it."

"Time will show," answered Mr. Mole. "Yes, time will show, and 'Up in a balloon boys,' will be my motto. I long for the wings of a dove, so that I might fly away and be at rest."

"A nice sort of dove you'll be," said Sir Sydney, "if you go away, and leave your children chargeable to the parish."

"When I address my remarks to you, sir," answered Mr. Mole, "I should feel grateful for your opinion, but not before."

"Sorry I spoke," said Sir Sydney, throwing away the stump of his cigar.

"You come down to my little club," continued Mr. Mole angrily, "the club that I have founded, and do all in your power to create a disturbance. To-night, sir, I shall move that you be formally expelled."

"Who's going to do it?" asked the baronet.

"That will be only a detail. When I have the authority of the club for your expulsion, rest assured you will not be long a 'Vagrant.'"

"Now don't be unkind, Mole," said Sir Sydney. "I never saw such a fellow to cut up rough. Here am I, the life and soul of your meeting, and you want to kick me out. Have you got any one who can do a cat-call as well as I can?"

"That's just it."

"Or bark like a dog, with a yelp equal to mine?"

"That's what I complain of."

"Or bellow like a bull like unto this child?" continued Sir Sydney. "If you aren't sociable, I shall get up an opposition to you. The 'Vagrants' meet at the 'Mitre;' I will take a room at the 'Randolph,' and start the 'Broken-hearted Club.'"

"What will that be like?" asked Jack.

"Rule I. shall run as follows: Any one who laughs, smiles, or looks in any way happy, shall be fined half-a-crown."

"I should be eligible for election in that Club," remarked Mr. Mole.

A glance at his sorrowful countenance made the young men laugh.

"You ought to be constituted a life-member at once, sir," said Jack.

"Rule II.," continued Sir Sydney, "shall enact that a man who cannot do the briny, *id est*, shed a tear when called upon by the president, shall be kicked till he does. By Rule III. every member shall belong to a burial club, and have a ready-made coffin under his bed."

"I say," cried Jack, "you are enough to frighten anyone. Talk about something more lively."

Sir Sydney, however, was full of his new idea, the "Broken-hearted Club," and went to his rooms to draw up a prospectus and rules, declaring that he would start it, and that it should become one of the institutions of the college.

Mr. Mole dined with Jack, and told him confidentially how miserable he was with Ambonia, whose temper was worse than ever. "Look here," said Mole, putting his hand to his head.

Jack saw nothing but a bare, closely-cropped surface, like that of a man recovered from a severe fever.

"I've had my head shaved and wear a wig, because she used to pull the hair out by handfuls, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, putting back the wig. "Do you wonder I am spending part of my modest fortune in building a balloon to explore unknown continents?"

Jack's candid opinion was that Mr. Mole was going mad as fast as he could.

But he did not say so.

In the evening they went to the "Mitre," and found most of the members of the Vagrant Club assembled in a large room.

Mr. Mole took the chair.

"Sit near me, Harkaway," said Sir Sydney, pulling his gown. "I'm going in for a row to-night."

Jack sat down, and the secretary rose.

"If any member is in arrears with his subscriptions," he said, "he'd better pay up sharp."

A few half-crowns were tendered, and Mr. Mole got on his legs.

"The question for debate this evening, gentlemen," he said, "is that in the opinion of the house, the proctor should be accompanied by a man beating a drum, so that notice of their approach might be given to the unwary undergraduates and others. It is proposed by Mr. Carden, and seconded by Mr. Harvey."

Tom Carden rose, and said—

"Gentlemen!"

"Order!" cried Sir Sydney. "We have not sung the vagrant anthem."

"Quite right," replied Mr. Mole. "I omitted it. Brother vagrants, follow my lead, if you please."

The anthem was then sung.

It ran as follows—

"I'm a vagrant; thou'rt a vagrant; vagrants too are he and she. We are vagrants; they are vagrants; where are they who would not be?"

This was received with great applause, and Carden continued—

"The abuse of proctorial power in this ancient seat of learning has——"

"A lot you've learnt," said a voice.

"Has, I repeat, led to the most disastrous results."

"When were you gated last?" cried the voice.

The president rose to order.

"Really, gentlemen, I must pray for silence," he said.

"Shut up. You're a duffer. Go home to your wife!" cried Sir Sydney.

"I will maintain order!" shouted Mr. Mole, whose voice trembled with passion. "When I accepted this high office, I swore——"

"You'd swear black was white, only you wouldn't believe it when you got home," answered Jack, in a disguised voice.

This allusion to Ambonia caused Mr. Mole to grow more furious.

"Turn him out!" said the vagrants.

"Who is the culprit?" asked the president. "This can not go on."

Jack saw Kemp in a corner, and imitating his voice, said—

"It was I, Mr. President."

"Apologise," replied Mr. Mole, "and we will pass it over. Mr. Kemp will apologise."

"What do you mean?" asked Kemp. "I never spoke."

"Silence for the chair," continued Mr. Mole. "I appeal to you as gentlemen to respect the president."

"You're an old humbug. It's my belief you're tight," Jack made Kemp say.

Mr. Mole descended from his chair, and approached Kemp.

"Did you say I was disguised in liquor?" he asked.

"I did not say anything," replied Kemp; "but I will say now that you're all a lot of lunatics, and I'm sorry I joined your rotten club. However, you won't see me again."

"Bonnet him," replied Sir Sydney.

Mr. Mole, in an evil moment for himself, acted upon this advice, and smashed Kemp's hat, which he had just put on, heavily over his eyes.

He had been out skating all day in the country, and had not had time to put on his academical costume.

Kemp hit out, and Mr. Mole rolled over.

"Row! row!" cried Sir Sydney, pushing against the

members, who had crowded round the combatants. "Back me up, Jack," he added.

Their united weights caused several men to fall against Mr. Mole, and they were soon struggling in a heap.

Kemp got his hat off, and made a rush through the mob, kicking and hitting right and left.

Jack got a blow on the chest and did not like it.

"What did you hit me for?" he asked.

"You must take your chance with the rest," replied Kemp. "There would have been no row if you and Dawson had not got it up."

"I never like to receive a favour without returning it," said Jack; "so there is your punch back again and another to keep it company, by way of interest."

The first blow closed one eye.

The second dislodged a tooth, which stuck in his throat.

Kemp grew black in the face—seemed in imminent danger of choking.

Sir Sydney Dawson was behind him, and Jack said—

"Hit him on the back; he's swallowed a tooth."

"Won't a kick do as well?" replied Sir Sydney. "He's one of the black-leg lot."

And he proceeded to kick him vigorously behind.

The process was not pleasant; but it did good, and the tooth went down.

Directly Kemp could breathe, he uttered a growl like a wild beast.

Springing on a chair, he turned the gas out.

The scene now became one of indescribable confusion.

Mr. Mole's voice was heard saying—

"Gentlemen, brother vagrants, I am deprived of every breath in my body. Oh! get up! Oh! oh! somebody has put his confounded boot in the pit of my—oh!—stomach."

"Go it one! Go it t'other!" said Sir Sydney, delighted at the riot he had created.

Suddenly a violent blow descended on his nose.

A hissing voice whispered—

"Take that, Mr. Harkaway, and remember that Kemp is more your enemy than ever, now."

"Deuce take you!" replied Sir Sydney, sneezing.

"I'm not Harkaway."

"Beg your pardon ; I've made a mistake in the dark," said Kemp.

"Don't do it again, that's all. My nose is all pulpy."

"I've lost a tooth."

"You can buy a false one, but I can't get a mimic nose. Fancy a man with a false nasal organ. Blow it—you, I mean, not the nose. I can't stand it. Take that."

Kemp moved away, and in the darkness Sir Sydney hit out at somebody else.

"Who the dickens is knocking at my door?" said the voice of Tom Carden. "Drop it, some of you."

"Dash my wig, Carden! I didn't mean to hit you," answered Sir Sydney.

"I don't care twopence who you meant to hit. Take it back again."

This time Carden struck out but Sir Sydney ducked his head, and Harvey, who was close by, received the blow under his ear.

"Stash it!" he cried. "I've done nothing to anyone. Props under the ear are not nice."

"Whom have I hit?" asked Carden.

"Harvey."

"My dear fellow, I apologise. Bother the darkness!"

"Hang your apology!" said Harvey, angrily, "If you were as big as the house, I'd have a go at you. Mind *your* ear this time."

He threw out his left, and withdrew it with a cry of pain.

Missing Carden, he had struck the president's desk, and found that wood was harder than heads.

Jack meanwhile got on a table, and feeling for the chandelier, struck a fusee, and relighted the gas.

Mr. Mole was leaning against the wall, gasping and rubbing his stomach.

Sir Sydney had a pocket handkerchief applied to his bleeding nose.

Harvey was holding his hand to his ear.

Carden occupied himself in shutting one eye and trying to find out if he could see with the other.

Kemp had vanished, and the open door certified to his exit.

CHAPTER XLVIII

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURE.

AFTER the unseemly scene which had occurred at the "Vags," the meeting could not continue.

Mr. Mole regretted deeply the unfortunate turn affairs had taken.

He dissolved the meeting, and those who remained in the room solaced themselves with pipes and beer.

Harvey and Jack returned to St. Aldate's, laughing heartily at the comical comedy of errors which had taken place.

"Have a game at chess, Dick?" said Jack.

"All right," replied Harvey.

They proceeded to play, and Jack happened to mention that the Duke of Woodstock was dead.

"Really!" cried Harvey. "Then Hilda is a widow?"

"Of course. Check to your king."

"I always liked that girl," answered Harvey, getting out of check, "and I envied that fool Woodstock when he married her."

"Did you? She is a nice girl, and her governor is awfully rich. Why don't you go in for the widow, Dick?"

"The duchess wouldn't look at a poor fellow like me," said Harvey.

"Check again. How careless you are. You must move your bishop to cover your king, and I take your queen," said Jack.

"Do you really think I should have any chance in that quarter?" asked Harvey, after a pause.

"Why not?"

"I wouldn't marry any girl I did not like for her money; but I have always thought I could love Hilda, and I don't mind telling you, Jack, that I have loved her and do love her now."

"You don't object to widows?"

"Rather like them in this particular instance," replied Harvey.

"Check," said Jack.

"By Jove! that's mate," exclaimed Harvey, after a glance at the board.

"You are thinking of Hilda to-night, and can't play."

"So I am. It would be a fine thing for me to marry Hilda. I have nothing but hard work before me, Jack; not that I'm afraid of it, you know; but I am only up here through the kindness of your father, and there are a lot of us at home. It is as much as the dear old governor can do to get along on his screw in the City."

"Have a try for it, Dick," said Jack. "Do you mind going up the Corn Market to-night?"

"What for?"

"With a letter of condolence from me to old Manasses. You can ask when the fair Hilda is expected home."

"All right; give me the letter, and I'll go," replied Harvey.

While Jack was writing a note to Moses Manasses, commiserating him on the loss of his son-in-law, and hoping that his daughter bore her affliction bravely, some other characters in our story were taking sweet counsel together.

These were Kemp and Hunston.

Kemp, on leaving the "Vags," had gone to a chemist's to wash his mouth out with alum, and have his eye painted, so as to avoid blackness if possible.

Then he wended his way to a low public-house in the city, and going into the tap-room, found Hunston waiting for him in a secluded corner.

There were only three other occupants of the room, and they were smoking long pipes, drinking beer, and talking politics in the loud, defiant quarrelsome tone which always characterises the political discussions of tap-room orators.

Consequently the two friends were quite at their ease, for there was no danger of their being overheard.

"You've kept me waiting long enough," growled Hunston, looking at a greasy clock on the mantelpiece.

"I couldn't help it," replied Kemp. "I went to a club called the 'Vags' for half an hour, because I want to keep in with Harkaway and his set, if I can."

"What's happened? You're hat's smashed, you're lip's swollen, and you've got a mouse on your left peeper. Has there been a row?"

"It's all that infernal Harkaway; he got up a riot, and I got punched. Look here; one of my top teeth is gone."

"Where?"

"I swallowed it. Harkaway knocked it into my throat, and while I was half-choking, somebody kindly kicked me till it went down. But don't talk about it. The thing only riles me, and I'll be even with him before I've done."

"He's haunted; let him alone," said Hunston, with a laugh.

"And he looks beastly bad over it," replied Kemp. "What a lark!"

"It was touch-and-go the ghost didn't drown him the other night at Mr. Holloway's."

"What a fellow you are to chatter," exclaimed Kemp, angrily. "Haven't I told you a dozen times never to talk unnecessarily."

"Well, let's get to the business in hand. Are you up to the mark?"

"Bang up. Slap bang up," answered Kemp, "and no nonsense about it. I'm in debt up to my neck everywhere. I owe money to tradesmen, who are dunning my life out of me, and I owe a lot to bill-discounters and betting-men, who threaten to have me up before the Vice-Chancellor or make me a bankrupt in London."

"You're like me," replied Hunston. "I want coin, and mean to have it whether you join me or not."

"Do you think we shall have much plunder?"

"Shall we have a lot of swag? Of course we shall. The old fool keeps a heap of money in the house?"

"Are you sure?"

"When I used to go to his house with you and Davis, do you think I kept my eyes shut? Not much. I was wide-awake. I know where the safe is, and where he keeps his loose cash."

"Is he a miser?"

"Not exactly; but he's just fond enough of money to like to have a lot about him, and not send it all to the bank. I will bet you," said Hunston, "that he has got a couple of thousand at his place."

"That will be one apiece," said Kemp, reflectively.

"Is that enough for you?"

"Just about enough, and that's all."

"You can have some of mine. I don't want so much

as you," replied Hunston. "And now the thing is arranged, I suppose we stop here till they shut up, and then get in at the back of the old fellow's premises."

"Yes, what will you drink?"

"Brandy. That's my liquor. I want a stimulant, and mustn't mix my drinks," replied Hunston.

When their wants were supplied, Kemp said reflectively—

"I wish we could fix the robbery upon Harkaway in some manner. Couldn't we put some jewellery in his rooms, stolen from the house, and send the police to search?"

"We will think the matter over," replied Hunston.

"Have you got the masks?"

"Yes, black ones, and some tools to get in with. I have forgotten nothing."

In this sort of conversation they passed the remainder of the evening, waiting for midnight, at which lone hour they reckoned the house they intended to rob would be quiet, and they could pursue their rascally purpose without interruption.

Meanwhile Harvey had gone with Jack's letter of condolence to Moses Manasses' house, and was admitted by a neat-looking little servant, who, recognising Harvey as a friend of the family, said with a smile—

"I'm glad you came to-night, sir."

"How is that, Rachel?" he asked.

"Because the duchess returned home this morning rather unexpectedly. We knew she was coming, but we didn't think to see her for a day or two."

Harvey's heart began to beat quickly.

He was ushered into the drawing-room where the Jew and his daughter were alone together.

"Welcome, Mr. Harvey," said Manasses. "My poor house has not lately been honoured by your presence."

"I, too, may be permitted to join my father in an expression of pleasure at seeing you, who are indeed an old friend," exclaimed Hilda.

"You are very good," replied Harvey. "I came up to-night with a letter from Harkaway, saying how sorry he was to hear of your recent loss. In deed we are all deeply grieved."

"You have heard of it?"

"Yes, from Emily. She had a note from you."

"It was very sudden," said Hilda. "Poor Woodstock was bathing in the Mediterranean, and being seized with cramp, sank instantly. My married life was a very short one. Scarcely what is called the honeymoon over, when I found myself a widow."

"In the full possession of all your matchless charms," said Harvey.

Hilda looked curiously at him, and with a woman's quickness of perception, so read his expression as to let her eyelids drop suddenly.

Up to the present time she had never suspected that she excited anything more than a friendly interest in him.

But this was not the time to think or speak of love.

She was in mourning for her husband, and during the remainder of the evening she returned his gaze coldly whenever their eyes met.

"Hilda is telling me all about her adventures in foreign lands," said the Jew. "I have not seen her since the illustrious alliance she contracted, and if the details will not be unpleasant to you, Mr. Harvey I shall be glad if you will spend what is left of the evening with us."

"Delighted, I'm sure," answered Harvey.

"You speak of my grand marriage," said Hilda. "Grandeur does not bring happiness."

"Your title, however, introduced you into the best society."

"What of that? It is true that I have dined with kings and queens, and that my dresses and jewellery excelled those of the most exalted station at court, but I was not happy."

"Incredible!" exclaimed the Jew, joining his hands together. "Father Abraham! is it possible that I have a child whose soul is above the vanities of life?"

"I assure you, father," replied Hilda, "that I am more at my ease in this dear old familiar room, with you by my side, and Mr. Harvey with us, than I was when the duke and I were the guests of the King and Queen of Greece, and all Athens gave *fêtes* in our honour."

"You make my heart rejoice, child. I thought your prosperity would make you ashamed of your parentage, and despise your father."

"Never! I shall not use my title. To every one,

whether at home or travelling, I shall be plain Mrs. Woodstock."

"Then shall my old age glide pleasantly to the grave, and no pang shall rend my heart when I am gathered to my fathers," said the Jew.

He raised his eyes thankfully to Heaven, and his lips moved as with a pious offering.

"Thanks be to the Lord of Israel," he continued. "My heart is in thee, Hilda. Come hither, child, and let me kiss thy brow. Of a verity thou art cast in the mould of thy sainted mother."

Little did the aged Jew know, as he pressed his child to his heart, that the Fates were busily engaged in cutting the thread of his life.

Far was he from thinking that the weird sisters were gazing upon the glass of life, from which the sand had almost run out.

Midnight clanged from more than one clock in the city.

"So late?" said the Jew; "and the bottle is empty."

"No more for me," replied Harvey, "many thanks all the same."

"Nay," continued the old man, "I will have my own way for once. We do not have a child restored to us every day. In my cellar there is some *Lachrymæ Christi* that the dean of St. Aldate's would give a ten-pound note for. To-night shall see us taste it."

"Let me go, father," said Hilda.

"No; stay you here, child. My legs are not so old, nor my hands so palsied that I cannot go an errand like this as as well the best of you."

So saying, the Jew took up a hand lamp, jingled his keys, and departed for the famous *Lachrymæ Christi*, which was in the cellar on the kitchen floor.

He had not been gone long when Hilda held up her finger.

"Hush!" she exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Harvey.

"Did you not hear a noise?"

Harvey listened attentively, and was soon satisfied that Hilda was right.

CHAPTER XLIX.

ROBBERY AND MURDER.

"THERE are men in the house," continued Hilda, nervously.

"I fancy I can hear footsteps," answered Harvey.

"Yes, yes ; they have entered the house from the back. They are descending from my father's bedroom, where he always keeps large sums."

"Do you think they are robbers ?"

"I cannot tell ; but I have often feared my father's fatal fondness for keeping money in the house would tempt thieves."

"I wish I had a pistol," said Harvey.

"Never mind that ; take the poker ; run after my father. Save him ; oh, save him, Mr. Harvey. They will meet him on the stairs. Run, run !"

Harvey did not hesitate any longer.

Snatching up the poker, he ran into the passage.

Already he heard the sound of a scuffle on the stairs.

This was followed by the smashing of glass.

It was the fall of the bottle of famous old wine which was destined never to be opened and drunk.

By the light of the hall lamp he saw the Jew struggling with the men, who wore black masks.

"Help, help !" cried the Jew, in accents which grew weaker and weaker. "Oh, holy Moses ! that I should die like this."

In an instant Harvey was on top of the stairs and had dealt one of the robbers a severe blow on the arm.

The fellow turned, and, drawing a long, dangerous-looking knife, plunged it into Harvey's body.

With a groan the unhappy young man sank upon the floor.

He was bathed in his own blood.

Almost at the same moment the Jew fell mortally wounded.

"Hilda—my child, my child ! The God of Isa-ac b-bless——" he murmured.

His voice failed him.

He was dead.

"This way quick," cried one of the robbers. "They are both settled. We must step it. This is a hanging business."

"Come on. You are always so ready with that infernal knife of yours," replied the other.

"Why not? It is a habit I learnt abroad," replied the first speaker, replacing his Malay knife in his belt.

Rapidly making their way to a window, they passed through it, reached the ground, and escaped.

Scarcely had they gone when Hilda came upon the scene, and sank down first of all beside the body of Harvey.

He still breathed.

She next examined her father.

His heart had ceased to beat, and his body was gashed with several wounds.

It was with difficulty the wretched girl preserved her senses, as, with tottering steps, she rushed into the street, flinging open wide the front door.

A policeman was passing.

"Help!" she cried. "There has been murder committed here."

"Murder, miss!" repeated the constable.

"Oh, yes. Go inside while I run for the doctor."

The policeman did as he was requested, and Hilda went to a doctor who lived hard by, and who was roused by her furious knocking.

"Come at once to my father's house," she said. "I fear he is dead and that a young Oxford gentleman is dying. Oh, for Heaven's sake! make haste."

The doctor did not wait to ask any questions.

He knew that in desperate cases a lost minute may cost a human life.

Following his fair guide, whose dishevelled hair waved wildly in the wind, he entered the Jew's house.

The policeman, caring more about the thieves than the victims, was searching the back-yard.

A very brief inspection showed the doctor that the Jew was really dead.

Throwing a tablecloth over his distorted features, he directed his attention to Harvey, who breathed heavily.

The knife had entered his side, and the wound was a very bad one.

To stop the effusion of blood was the first thing.

This was done as well as the circumstances would permit.

"Have you a bedroom handy?" asked the doctor of Hilda, who was kneeling in silent prayer by the dead body of her only parent.

"Yes," she said, rising. "It is selfish of me to neglect the living for the dead, but, if you only knew how he loved me—how kind he was to me—how——"

Her utterance was checked by a burst of tears.

"This way, sir," she continued, suppressing her grief, by a heroic effort. "I will conduct you. Poor young gentleman ; it is through me he has come to this."

She led the way upstairs and showed the doctor a room.

He carried Harvey in his arms as if he had been a child, and laid him on the bed.

Harvey was perfectly insensible, and did not evince any sign of life beyond a feeble effort occasionally to breathe more freely, followed by a convulsive movement of the limbs.

The doctor and Hilda sat up with him all night.

In vain the police pursued the tracks of the robbers ; nothing could be seen of them.

On the following morning Harvey recovered his consciousness and was able to speak, though very faint from loss of blood.

The coroner held an inquest on the body of Moses Manassas, the Jew money-lender of the Corn Market.

All the evidence Harvey was able to give amounted to this :

He had gone to the assistance of the Jew, who was attacked by two men.

One of them had but one arm.

Of that fact he was satisfied.

It was the maimed man who had stabbed him, but as soon as the knife entered his flesh, he lost consciousness.

Property to a large amount had been carried off.

Gold, notes and jewellery, amounting in value to nearly four thousand pounds, had been taken.

Therefore the object of the attack was decidedly robbery.

A large reward was offered for the apprehension of the thieves and murderers, for such they were.

No one-armed man could be found in Oxford.

The doctor declared that it would be unsafe to remove Harvey for at least a couple of months.

Hilda agreed to nurse him, and take care of him in her house until he got perfectly well.

A deep feeling of pity, not unmingled with affection, grew up in her heart for the young man who had so generously risked his own life to save her father.

The funeral of Manasses was strictly private.

Only Hilda, Jack and a Jew, an intimate friend of the deceased, followed him to his last resting-place.

Harvey, when well enough, was not without numerous visits from his friends, among whom Jack was the most attentive.

Hilda's grief for the loss of her father was very acute, but as time wore on, she recovered her serenity.

A will was found which made her the heiress of all the Jew's vast wealth, with the exception of a legacy.

This was a bequest to Mr. John Harkaway, of St. Aldate's College, Oxford.

It consisted of the handsome sum of ten thousand pounds sterling.

JACK was delighted at this lucky windfall, but he resolved to make the best use of it. Invested at three per cent., it would bring him in an income of three hundred a year.

This was what his father allowed him.

So writing home, he told his father of his good fortune, and begged him to discontinue making him any allowance in future, as he would get along upon the Jew's legacy.

His father was delighted, pleased beyond measure, at this proof of Jack's high spirit and good-heartedness, for it showed that he had no extravagant, wasteful tastes.

Jack alluded in his letter to his father's kindness in paying for Harvey at his request, and hoped that his relinquishment of his allowance might be looked upon as a set off for Harvey's allowance.

The Christmas vacation now approached.

On the fourteenth of January the Oxford term began, and Jack prepared to read hard at home, taking his books with him.

"Is everything ready, Monday?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sare," replied the black.

"Books all packed up?"

"Yes, sare. All the wine drank, but me put half a bottle of brandy away, cos that thief scout not get it."

Mr. Buster happened to be waiting respectfully in the passage, expecting to receive a small tip from his master on his departure.

His injured feelings on hearing this remark would not allow him to be silent.

Advancing with an air which more betokened grief than anger, he said—

"Sir, may I speak a word, Mr. Harkaway? Which you have always been a good master to me, likewise kind and considerate."

"If you want five shillings, here it is," replied Jack, with a laugh. "Save this butter for somebody else who likes it more than I do."

"Leastway, sir, it's hard to be accused of half a bottle of brandy, which I wouldn't have touched a drop, sir; no, not if it had stood in the cupboard all the long vacation."

"Monday thought it better not to give you the chance, you see."

Buster pocketed the five shillings, which, having been duly paid his wages, was half-a-crown more than he had expected, and as the money sank into the depths of his breeches-pocket with a pleasant jingle, he replied—

"Mr. Monday, sir, has got a spite agin me."

"He only looks after my interests."

"Which, begging your pardon, sir, is not always the case. Me and my friend Mr. Clinker—who is well known in the university, as an honest scout never stepped across a quad, or brought up hot water of a morning—we has been a-stagging of Mr. Monday, sir."

"What on earth may that operation consist in?" asked Jack, much amused.

"He's got a gal, sir."

"A what?"

"A gal, sir. He's got a young gal on, though what she can find to see in the black abomination, is a regular licker for both me and Mr. Clinker."

"What's this, Monday; are you in love?" said Jack.

Monday looked surprised, and made no reply.

But he darted an angry glance at Buster, who, enjoying his triumph, proceeded—

“This ’ere gal, as I’m a-telling you of, is in a ’bacconist’s shop, and serves behind the counter. Well, sir, he’s been a-giving of her most hexpensive presents, which I’m sure he can’t hafford hout hof his salary, and he’s been a cramming her up with a pack of lies, that he’s a king.”

“Oh, Monday,” said Jack, laughing, “I am surprised.”

“That hain’t all, sir; he said he’ll take her to some highland in the Pacific Hocean, and make her a queen.”

Jack laughed more and more.

“And if he didn’t ought to be kicked for it, I hope I mayn’t have no plum-puddin’ on Christmas day. If I was that there gal’s father, I’d buy a stick and leather him within a hinch of his life, I would.”

“You dirty thief scout!” answered Monday, furiously. “What for you watch me? What for you mean telling things ’bout me?”

He ran to the wall and took down a spear.

The scout got behind Jack, saying—

“Oh, Mr. Harkaway, protect me, sir. I’ll have him up afore the mayor if he dares to prod me with that horrid thing. Ugh! You awful, wild, savage beast, you.”

“Quiet, Monday,” exclaimed Jack.

The black stopped half-way in obedience to his master’s command.

“As far as I can see, your complaint is that Monday has a sweetheart in a tobacconist’s shop. If she likes him, why shouldn’t she?” replied Jack.

“He’s a nigger, sir,” said Buster.

“What does that matter? A better heart never beat under a white skin, than under Monday’s black one. He’s a king in Limbi, and he could make the girl a queen—so much for that. Now you insinuate that he gives her expensive presents, and must rob me to do so.”

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s what you mean?”

“Cert’n’y, sir, precisely,” said Buster.

“Me never steal you of sixpence, sare,” Monday exclaimed. “Let me give him some spear, sare; it do um good.”

“Be quiet, I say. Now I will tell you one thing, Mr.

Buster. Such is my confidence in Monday, that I pay him no salary at all ; he keeps the keys of my cash-box, and I tell him to go and help himself whenever he wants any money. If he took fifty pounds at any time, he'd be as welcome to it as my own mother."

The scout stared in amazement.

"I am indebted to Monday for many kindnesses," answered Jack. "He is not my servant, he is my friend. I know he would not abuse my confidence, and I do not suppose the presents he has given his lady-love are very valuable."

"Me give only nine, ten pounds for um all, sare. Me got bill to show, sare," answered Monday.

"There is an end of it," said Jack. "Put up that spear."

"Just give um one little poke, sare," pleaded Monday.

"I'll have the law of him if he does, s'elp me Bob, I will," answered Buster, in an agony of fright.

"Do as I ask you," answered Jack, "and go and call a fly. I will walk to the station in about an hour ; you can go on first with the luggage."

"Yes, sare," replied Monday, replacing the spear on the wall.

Buster slunk away to tell his friend Clinker what had happened.

Jack wended his way to Sir Sydney's rooms, to say good-bye ; he having previously called upon Harvey and passed some time with the poor fellow, who was progressing favourably but slowly.

Hilda was wonderfully attentive to him.

She read to him, talked and played to him, and made his enforced confinement so agreeable, that Harvey wished his period of illness might be longer, for a more kind or considerate nurse never existed than the Jew's daughter.

CHAPTER L

A STRANGE TRAVELLING COMPANION.

SIR SYDNEY DAWSON'S rooms were in a state of confusion fully equal to that of Jack's.

Luggage encumbered the centre of the sitting-room, and the scout was busily engaged in putting the finishing touch to a portmanteau.

"'Bliged to take a lot of books home," said Sir Sydney, "just to humbug my guardian that I'm a reading man. Gave my scout half a sovereign to cut a lot of classics yesterday so that it should look as if I dipped into them. Any good news of Harvey?"

"Yes, he is decidedly better."

"Horrible thing about that poor Jew. One Israelite the less, though it don't make much difference. If Woodstock had lived, he might have carried on the business under the name of Manasses and Co., he being the Co."

"Fancy a duke lending money at sixty per cent.!" said Jack.

"Not a bad game, either. I've got some spare cash, and shouldn't mind an investment at the same rate," replied Sir Sydney.

"Going home to-day?" asked Jack.

"Yes; 2.40 train. Come with you part of the way, if you like; I go to Swindon. Sit down and have a weed; there's no hurry."

"Thanks," replied Jack.

"Wonder the police don't find the old Jew's murderers," said Sir Sydney, offering Jack his case. "My mind runs on that murder."

"So does mine, and I think Hunston must have been in it. Harvey swears that a one-armed man stabbed him. They got well off with the swag; rather a rich booty too."

"Have you any suspicion of a nature likely to afford the faintest clue as to who the murderers may be?" asked Sir Sydney, looking fixedly at Jack.

"I've remarked one thing," said Jack. "Kemp has

been very flush lately. Since the robbery he has paid all his ticks, and started a tandem. He says he's come into a legacy."

"Kemp and Hunston were friends," sneered Sir Sydney.

"Next term I mean to watch Kemp narrowly," replied Jack. "I have told the police here all I know about him, and if he is seen with Hunston at any time, they will both be arrested."

"On spec?"

"Yes, on spec; and not a bad speculation either."

"By Jove!" said Sir Sydney, "what a lot of villany there is running about loose in this wicked old world of ours; it's about time it was destroyed again."

"What would become of you then?"

"Oh, I'd take my chance with the rest," replied the baronet.

"I like you when you become virtuous. Some of these days we shall find you a respectable country gentleman, in the commission of the peace, committing little boys for throwing stones, and men bagging a hare or a rabbit."

"Yes, I suppose that will be my line of life. Owning land has its duties, and the repression of evil-doing is one of them."

"Will you come and see me, if you are down my way in the vac.? I'm a Hertfordshire man, you know," said Jack.

"Ah! country celebrated for its hedgehogs, I believe," replied Sir Sydney. "Should be delighted, my dear boy, if I had time. No man I should like to give a hail so much as thy sweet self, but I'm booked too deep already. Leave it till the Long."

"Then we shall all be in Rome or Naples, or goodness knows where."

"Well, there's one comfort, we have enough of each other up here."

"Because we can't very well help ourselves. That's not like knowing a man at home, is it?"

"Not exactly; well, leave it open. If I run up to the little village and don't get cornered in town, I'll run down into your forsaken part of the world and stir you up a bit."

"What may that mean?"

"Oh, ride your best show horse and break his knees, run away with your prettiest sister, or——"

"I haven't any, worse luck."

"Then I'll set the house on fire and roast your paralytic grandmother to death."

"Out again," said Jack; "grandmothers are luxuries I can't boast of."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Imagine the state of a man's mind who hasn't got a grandmother. If that were my case I should immediately commit suicide."

"Why?"

"Because a grandmother is something to look forward to; she has generally got tin, and, if you are awfully wild and wicked she is sure to take compassion on you and leave you the lot."

"You will be certain to come in for your grand maternal relation's tin," said Jack, laughing.

"It's a moral; but, excuse me, dear boy, why can't you say grandmother? Long words are bad and worry me. It took me a quarter of a minute to understand what you meant by grand maternal relation."

"I——"

"Don't apologise; only be careful not to let it occur again. I am not a walking dictionary, and it is unkind in a friend to give one more trouble than he can help."

"You'll come if you can, won't you?"

"If the family complaint of the Dawsons does not seize upon me in the meantime."

"What is that?" inquired Jack.

"We are supposed to be a very careless race, and are subject to what the doctors call a turning to bone, or, medically, ossification of the heart."

"Bosh!" said Jack. "Call it assification of the head; excuse the long word, you know."

"Will you go out of the door or the window? Take your choice," said Sir Sydney, laughing.

"The door for choice."

"I'll go with you. It is time to be getting station-wards. Clinker!" Where's that beast Clinker? Oh, ye dons and little fishes, why were scouts invented to plague the minds of unhappy undergraduates?"

"Here, sir; coming, sir," replied Clinker, "I was only a-talking to Mr. Buster, sir, about that black thief of Mr. Harkaway's, sir, which he's a disgrace and a 'bomination to the 'varsity, sir."

As he entered the room, he caught sight of Jack.

"Didn't know you was here, sir," he exclaimed. "Not as Mr. Buster's opinion is mine, sir. I was only a-repeatin' his words, sir. I've always found Mr. Monday a very civil-spoken sort of gentleman, though black, which, begging your pardon again, sir, his more 'is misfortin than 'is fault, Mr. Harkaway, sir."

"If you say anything about my black prince I shall tell him, and I won't answer for his savage nature."

"That's where it is, sir," said Clinker. "He runs and catches up a spear. He ought to be muzzled, he did, or leastways handcuffed, or have a log of wood chained to his leg."

"You had better do it."

"Mr. Buster and me, sir, was a-talking about it," replied Clinker; "that is, begging your pardin again, sir, and we shall have a general meeting of scouts in the vacation, when hall personal differences will be discussed, and perhaps we shall decide to put a log on him next term."

"You infernal chattering humbug! I shall have to put a stopper on your tongue," exclaimed Sir Sydney Dawson.

"Yes, sir; cert'n'y, sir."

"Go and take this luggage down and get me a fly."

"Cert'n'y, sir," replied Clinker.

"Won't you walk to the station with me?" asked Jack.

"No, thanks; too done up for walking. Give you a lift in my waggon."

Harkaway accepted the offer.

In the quad they met the two scouts.

"Merry Christmas, gentlemen," said Buster.

"And it's wishing of you both a happy New Year, sirs," added Clinker.

"Same to you, and many of them," replied Jack and Sir Sydney, as they got into the fly and were driven to the station.

When the fly drove off Clinker remarked—

"I don't think my master will make old bones."

"Don't know much about mine either," replied Buster.

"He's very 'centric; makes friends of blacks, and he's been very queer at times lately."

They both shook their heads gravely and went to see their other master's property dispatched to the station.

Sir Sydney travelled with Jack to the junction and there got out, shaking his hand and "putting on a fresh weed," as he termed it.

Jack was soon deep in an illustrated paper as the train moved on.

He had not heard the door open or anyone get in, but when he looked up, he gave a start.

In the opposite corner, on the other side of the carriage, sat a man.

Jack saw it was the same being he had encountered on the ice, and he resolved he would be humbugged no longer by any pretended ghost.

CHAPTER LL.

A FIGHT WITH A GHOST.

THE train entered a tunnel.

Jack was not in the mood then to see or fancy any thing magical.

The muscles of his arms seemed to swell, and his whole frame was full of vigour.

He sprang to his feet.

At this moment the flickering lamp at the top of the carriage went out—a dense darkness prevailed.

Jack had only one idea in his head, just then, and that was to get hold of the ghost.

Groping his way in the dark to the opposite corner, he all at once came in contact with a solid arm.

It was of flesh and blood apparently, for a hand glided up and seized his throat, closing convulsively on the windpipe.

Jack's eyes began to start from his head.

Twining his strong arms round the thing that had got hold of him, he pressed them together with all his mighty force.

He heard, as he thought, the ribs of the ghost crack.

There was a sharp, short cry of agony.

The awful choking grasp round his throat relaxed, and he could breathe again; that squeeze, which was like a giant's hug, had done it.

Jack was himself again.

He felt that it was no ghost he was fighting with, or, if a ghost, a very extraordinary one, for he was grappling with flesh and blood.

His spirit was up, and he threw himself with all his force on his antagonist.

They pressed against the door.

It had been imperfectly shut, and burst open.

A heavy body rolled from his arms, and fell on the line.

The next moment the speed of the engine slackened, and the train glided into the light and steamed into the station.

For a time he was dazzled by the light, but stepping on the platform, he called the guard, who came up.

"What is it, sir?" asked the guard.

"I have been attacked in the tunnel," said Jack, "and the man has tumbled out on the line. My name is Harkaway; take my baggage on to Paddington, and put it in the cloak-room; leave the ticket with the superintendent. There is half a crown for you. Where is the station-master?"

"Mr. Elvey," said the guard.

The station-master approached.

"Gentleman wants to speak to you, sir. All right behind," said the guard, who blew his whistle, and the train went on, leaving Jack standing on the platform.

"Get lamps and come into the tunnel," said Jack.

"What has happened, sir?" asked the station-master.

"I have been attacked in the tunnel, by some one or other, and in self-defence I fought him; he has tumbled out of the train," answered Jack, who was still in a great state of excitement.

"Stop here, sir," said Elvey, "and I will take two men with me; the down express is nearly due."

As he spoke, the express thundered through the station.

"Now we are all right; there is nothing to interfere with us but an up-goods, and that's always late. Here, Bates and Wright!"

Two porters answered his summons.

"Get lanterns and a stretcher. Quick!"

In a few minutes the station-master and the porters walked down the line to the tunnel, with lanterns and a stretcher.

Jack paced the platform uneasily.

Ten minutes elapsed, and then a procession was seen emerging from the mouth of the tunnel.

The station-master was first with a lantern in each hand, and the porters carried a body on the stretcher.

It was that of a young man, and directly it came near enough for Jack to see it, he recognized Frank Davis.

His mind was in a whirl ; he could not understand it all.

"Better take him to the railway inn, sir, and send for a doctor," said Elvey.

"Do as you like. I will wait here," replied Jack.

Half an hour elapsed.

The station-master returned.

"Well?" said Jack shortly.

"The doctor says the gentleman can't live long, sir, and he keeps on asking for a Mr. Harkaway," replied Elvey.

"That's my name."

"Will you come to his bedside?"

"Yes; lead the way," replied Jack.

It was but a short walk to the railway hotel, which was opposite the station, and Jack was conducted upstairs.

On the bed was stretched the ghastly and dying form of Frank Davis.

"Harkaway," he said, in a faint voice, "I have sent for you to beg your forgiveness. I am dying now."

"I am sorry for it ; I thought you were dead long ago," said Jack.

"You were deceived. The injury I received when I fell into the quad at St. Aldate's was not fatal. Acting upon Kemp's advice, I pretended to be dead, and appeared to you at different times, to lead you to believe that you were haunted."

"For what reason?"

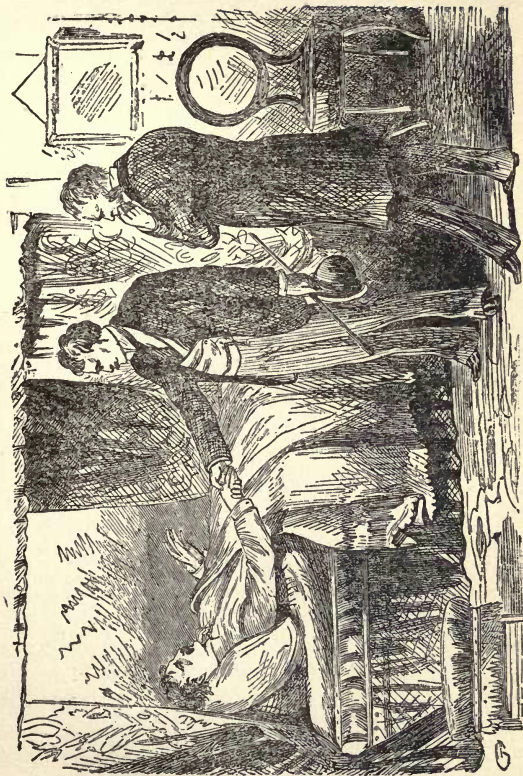
"To make you commit suicide, to kill you, to get rid of you, for I knew that as long as you lived, I had no chance with Emily, whom I have loved better than my life or honour, ever since I first saw her."

"It was you I have seen in my chambers?"

"Yes. I had a false key."

"And on the ice?" persisted Jack.

"I hoped to drown you. God forgive me ! I am sorry for it all now."



" ' BEWARE OF HUNSTON AND KEMP,' SA'D THE DYING MAN."

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"What did you mean to do in the railway carriage?"

"Throw you out of the door as you did me. I left the door open on purpose," answered Davis.

Jack shrank back at this revelation, which completely astounded him.

"Give me your hand, Harkaway," continued Davis whose voice grew weaker and yet more feeble.

Jack did so.

"God forgive me! Say a prayer for me. I feel I am going."

He was indeed sinking fast.

The injuries he had received in the tunnel were of a mortal character.

"I forgive you, Davis, with all my heart," replied Jack, "though you have led me a life for no fault of my own. Anything I did to you was provoked by your conduct to me."

"I know it. My life might have been a better one, but I deserve my fate," answered the dying man.

A rush of blood to his mouth stopped his further utterance for a time.

At length he held out his hand to Jack.

"Take it," he said.

Jack did so.

"Beware of Hunston and Kemp; they are murderers—"

He could say no more.

The blood rushing into his lungs again suffocated him, and he passed away.

Though Jack was very sorry for his frightful end, he could not help feeling some satisfaction at knowing that his enemy was really dead this time.

Davis's last utterance, no doubt, related to the attack on the Jew.

He wished to say that Hunston and Kemp were murderers.

It was with a heavy, but still with a lightened heart, that Jack pursued his journey.

He had to attend the inquest, at which a verdict of accidental death was returned.

No one blamed him.

He had only acted in self-defence.

During the holidays he read hard, and soon became

himself again. His health, which had suffered while he thought himself haunted, resumed its former condition, and he passed his spare time in playing with a football club in the village.

Emily had asked him to get into the Oxford eleven which was going to play Eton in Lent term, and he felt confident he could make himself fit with a little practice.

CHAPTER LII.

PAT O'RAFFERTY.

WHEN the vacation was over, Jack returned to college, and once more took up his residence at St. Aldate's.

Every thing went on as usual.

Tom Carden wanted him to row again in the eight at Putney, but this Jack refused, as he wanted to read hard, and come out well in the schools.

Rowing was all very well. He liked the honour and the exercise, but two years of it running would take up too much time.

So the captain grumblingly went away to look for a new man.

The football match with Eton came off.

It was won by Oxford, and Jack distinguished himself by winning one goal, and breaking a leg in a charge.

The poor fellow who had come in contact with our brawny giant was carried off the field.

Jack was very sorry, but it was not his fault that he was so strong.

During this Lent term, Jack made a new acquaintance.

The weather was very mild, more like spring than winter, and he frequently sculled on the river in his boat.

One day he was quietly going down towards Iffley, thinking over his future prospects.

Davis was dead.

Of Hunston, he saw nothing; and, for the time, Kemp seemed disposed to let him alone.

But Kemp was in reality nothing better than a sleeping snake.

At any moment he might wake up and bite.

Suddenly something caught Jack round the neck, flung him forward in the boat and his sculls were dashed from his hands.

At first he thought he had run up against a barge.

But when he picked himself up, he could see nothing whatever.

A burst of ringing laughter from the bank made him turn his eyes in that direction.

He saw a young man standing by the stump of a pollard willow, and almost level with his waist was a stout cord.

This was stretched across the river, and fastened on each side to the branch of a tree.

It was the cord which had caught him by the neck and thrown him.

"I say, you sir!" he exclaimed, angrily; "what do you mean by setting traps like this for people?"

The young man who wore the college cap and gown, laughed harder than ever.

"I shall have to knock some of that grinning out of you!" cried Jack.

"That would puzzle you at any time, be jabbers; but just now more than ever," was the reply.

"Why?"

"Because you have lost your sculls, and are drifting down to the lasher."

This was true.

For the first time, Jack realized his position.

He had lost both sculls, and was perfectly helpless, while, ahead of him, he could hear the sullen roar of the weir.

"Sit still like a good boy, and don't growl any more," said the stranger, "and on the word of a gentleman, I will get you out of the mess."

"How?"

"My boat is moored lower down. I'll get in, pick up your sculls, and apologise; will that do for you?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "though I don't half like it."

"Of course you don't," said the stranger, with another laugh; "do you fale sore, eh?"

"Rather, you've made my jaws ache. I had half a mind to swim over to you just now and punch your head."

"My dear fellow, you wouldn't be in it with me. I am the best light weight out; you couldn't lick me, if you tried for a week."

The measured sound of oars was heard coming down the river.

"Hullo!" said the practical joker. "Here are some more putty-heads coming."

"It's one of the college eight," said Jack; "cut the cord."

"Not I."

"You will swamp the lot!"

"All the better," replied the stranger.

He ran quickly down the bank, jumped into his boat—picked up Jack's sculls, gave them to him, and did it all in less than a minute.

"Now!" he cried. "Pull quickly on, and lay under the bank with me; we must see the fun, and then get into the lock, before they can twig us. Eight to two and the coxswain are odds which I don't mean to face."

Though he did not like it, Jack did as he was told, for the stranger had a way with him of making those he came in contact with obey him.

They hid under the bank.

On came the eight with a steady swinging stroke of thirty-six a minute.

"It's the St. Aldate's boat," said the stranger.

"So it is, by all that's funny. There's Tom Carden."

Before Jack could say any thing more, the sharp eye of the coxswain had spied the rope.

"Easy all!" he cried, loudly. "Back water all!"

It was too late.

The rope caught the bow, two, three and four, pitching them into the river, while five, six and seven were sent sprawling over their stretchers.

Tom Carden was spared, as the impetus of the boat was stopped.

The captain looked around him in surprise.

"What the deuce is up?" he said, wonderingly.

"Why," said the coxswain, "some son of a sea-cook has tied a rope across the river."

Taking out his knife, he cut it in half.

Those who remained in the eight pulled themselves up grumblingly, and paddled to the shore, where those who had been pitched in the water were shivering after their swim, and rubbing the backs of their necks as if they did not like it.

"I wish I could catch the brute," said Tom Carden. "It's a rascally thing to do. Keep it dark, you fellows, or we shall be nicely chaffed."

Touching Jack's arm, the stranger whispered—

"Now's your time. Come on, and we shall get locks before the eight come up. Here, get into my boat, we can double scull. Tie yours up, and we can change again when we come back."

Jack hastily fastened the painter, and to his surprise found himself in a short time sculling with a strange man whom he had not known from Adam five minutes before.

The stranger seemed to divine his thoughts.

He said—

"You are wondering what there is about me to make you do as you are told. It's a way I've got. I call it me Irish charm."

"You are in the university, of course?" answered Jack.

"Yes, I'm a Maudlin man. My name is Pat O'Rafferty, and as every one must have a rayson for living, my *raison d'être* is to play practical jokes. I live for fun, and now who are you?"

"Jack Harkaway," was the reply.

"What, the great oar, the athlete, the pride of the 'Varsity, who is making all the muscular Christians wape because he won't row again this year; the converted mass of muscles, who is going to court the muses, and turn rayding man? I have heard of you, my friend."

"One must read a little," answered Jack modestly.

"I am proud to make your acquaintance," continued O'Rafferty. "Here we are at locks. Wake the man up, will you?"

"Locks!" cried Jack, "lo-lo-locks-s-s."

A few minutes sufficed to carry them through, and they settled down for a steady row, which continued for about a mile.

Suddenly O'Rafferty stopped.

"I've had about enough of this," he exclaimed; "suppose we have a quiet chat."

"I shouldn't mind a beer and some bread and cheese," answered Jack.

O'Rafferty looked round and saw on his left a very neat-looking lawn sloping down to the river.

It belonged to a gentleman's house, the approach to which was over the grass amidst flower-beds and shrubs, while on each side was a wall fringed with trees.

The windows of a room opening on to the lawn were open.

Inside could be seen a snug little party enjoying a substantial lunch.

The popping of champagne corks mingled with the innocent laughter of young girls.

"Just in time, by hookey!" exclaimed O'Rafferty.

"For what?" asked Jack.

"Some of that lunch. Scull into the lawn."

"Do you know the people?"

"Not the laste little bit in the world."

"And you are going to lunch there?" continued Jack.

"That's a moral certainty, and you with me," replied O'Rafferty.

"Are you mad?" asked Jack.

"Not much. I'll give you a specimen of my sanity directly. You must do every thing I tell you. Touch your cap when you are spoken to, and trate me as the master. Look here; take off your college cap and leave your gown under the sate. Put on this cricketing affair."

O'Rafferty produced from the pocket of his shooting-coat two brown caps.

"I always come provided for contingencies," he said.

"I flatter myself we look like business men, eh?"

"We might pass muster in a crowd," replied Jack.

He did not know in the least what they were going to do, but he sculled into the lawn.

O'Rafferty fastened the boat, and seizing the boat-hook, jumped ashore.

"Come along," he exclaimed.

Jack followed him.

Walking across the lawn, O'Rafferty began to measure distances with the boat-hook, as if calculating how far it was from one side to the other of the lawn.

A splendid greenhouse had been erected on the left and he took very particular notice of this.

All his actions were easily observable from the windows.

Presently a tall footman in blue and silver livery,

his hair powdered, left the house and stalked down towards the intruder.

"Now for it," muttered Jack. "I expect we shall be kicked into the river, and we deserve it for our cool cheek."

CHAPTER LIIL

COOL CHEEK.

THE footman approached O'Rafferty, and said, in an insolent tone—

"Are you aware you are trespassing, my man?"

"Perfectly," answered the Irishman, adding, "Mr. Martin!"

"Sir," said Jack, touching his cap.

"You will make a note, if you please, to this effect. The most direct road is through the greenhouse on the left. The distance is six poles, one perch."

"Yes, sir," answered Jack, making an entry with a pencil in his pocket-book.

The footman spoke again.

"What am I to tell the major?" he asked.

"Major," repeated O'Rafferty, as if he was thinking deeply.

"Major Chutney, late of the Indian army is my master."

"Ah, yes, of course. Tell Major Chutney, with my compliments, that I am Mr. Berry, surveyor to the proposed extension railway, which is called in the Act of Parliament in that case made and provided, 'The Abingdon, Sandford, and Iffley Railway.'"

"Indeed, sir," said the footman, more civilly; "the major would have a fit if he thought the line was going to cut through his garden."

"And tell him," continued O'Rafferty, as if he had not heard the remark, "that it seems to me the easiest way to take off the left-hand corner of the greenhouse, so as to cut over the meadows beyond, and so reach the terminus or junction at Oxford."

The footman went away at a quick trot.

"That will wire them, me lad; see if it don't. Look at old Chutney stumping down to us. I'll lay a hundred on the lunch now," replied O'Rafferty, chuckling with glee.

In fact, Major Chutney, an old and fiery Bengalee, was walking along the garden.

Bowing politely to O'Rafferty, he said—

"Mr.—a—Berry, I think I have the honour of addressing."

"That is my name," answered O'Rafferty, stiffly.

"You are the—a—the surveyor of a projected railway."

"The Abingdon, Sandford, and Iffley Extension Line. Our bill will be in committee as soon as parliament meets," said O'Rafferty.

"Oh, yes; dear me!" said the major, with a forced smile. "Highly interesting and useful things, railways—um. We are at lunch. My wife and daughters will esteem it an honour if you will honour us with your company."

"Thank you, I shall be proud," answered O'Rafferty.

Turning to Jack, he added—

"Martin!"

"Sir," answered Jack, scarcely able to restrain a smile.

"Stay by the boat, if you please, until my return," said O'Rafferty.

"Nay," replied the major, "ask him to join you. He is——"

"My assistant, Major Chutney. A young man of good family, who will some day rank amongst our foremost engineers."

"By all means ask him in. My servants will see to your boat. Here, John, Thomas, William," said the major.

"The boat is moored, sir," replied O'Rafferty. "Do not disturb your household; no harm can come to her where she is."

"If that is so, follow me," answered the major, stumping back to the house.

The young men were ushered into the dining-room, and introduced to Mrs. Chutney, and her two lovely daughters.

Jack was rather ashamed of the whole adventure into which he had been drawn without meaning it.

But O'Rafferty evidently looked upon it as a good joke, and a part of that fun, in search of which he had said he spent his existence.

Mrs. Chutney was extremely amiable, and the daughters found the two strangers so gentlemanly and nice that they took quite a fancy to them.

O'Rafferty flirted with Alice.

Jack made a little love to Rose.

He was far away from Emily, and thought he should never meet the young ladies again.

Such is the deceitful nature of young men.

In this expectation, however, he was deceived, for he did meet them again, and at a time when he least expected and wished for it.

Pleasant as was the little party, everything must come to an end.

The young men said good-bye, and as Jack squeezed Rose's hand, she whispered—

"We shall meet again, I hope."

"Thanks ; I hope so too," answered Jack.

Major Chutney preceded his guests to the boat.

"I trust, sir," he said, "that you will find a more convenient course for your railway than through my grounds."

"Rest easy, major," replied O'Rafferty ; "the Abingdon, Sandford and Iffley Extension shall not trouble you."

The major tried to slip a ten-pound Bank of England note into his hand.

"What !" exclaimed O'Rafferty, affecting indignation.

"You dare to bribe me ?"

"Only a little present, sir," answered the major.

"Bribe me, bribe a public servant !" shouted O'Rafferty, angrily. "This is an insult I can not forgive. By the powers, sir, the railway shall come through your grounds."

"My dear, good sir," pleaded the major.

"It shall cut your greenhouse in half."

"Listen to me——"

"I will have a goods station in your kitchen garden," thundered O'Rafferty.

The Major groaned, and O'Rafferty sprang into the boat, where Jack was already seated, and pushing off with stately grandeur, he left the major standing on the grass in mute despair.

When they got out of earshot O'Rafferty exclaimed—

"Nice sort of man, nice daughters too ; old woman a little snuffy, wine good, house good."

"I have enjoyed myself very much," answered Jack.

"But I am sorry we entered a private circle under false pretences."

"Did we do any harm?"

"No, you frightened the old major, though."

"All his own fault," replied O'Rafferty. "Did he think I wanted his dirty money." But now, Mr. Harkaway, let us scull back to Oxford and pick up your boat on the way. By-the-bye, we shall be late for hall. Will you dine with me in my rooms?"

"With pleasure," answered Jack.

The row back to college was accomplished without difficulty.

CHAPTER LIV.

A ROBBERY AT THE BANK.

ON the whole Jack was very much pleased with his new acquaintance.

When they parted in Christ-Church meadows, O'Rafferty exclaimed—

"Don't be later than six, and bring a friend with you. I will ask a man, so we shall have a square party, which is much better than an angular feed of three or five."

Jack promised to do so, and went straight to Sir Sydney Dawson's rooms.

The baronet was lying on a sofa, smoking as usual, and looking very tired and sleepy.

"Ah, Harkaway !" said Sir Sydney. "It is refreshing to an invalid like me to see a hale and hearty young fellow like yourself. As for me, I am a wreck."

"What's the matter now?" asked Jack, who knew his friend's fondness for running his health down after dissipation.

"I'm breaking, I am indeed."

"Where were you last night?"

"Oh, had some fellows up. Gave a wine, you know."

Asked you to come, but you wouldn't. Owe you one for that."

"And," said Jack. "I suppose you drank champagne, and played loo until daylight?"

"At a wine-party men usually do drink wine," answered Sir Sydney. "There is nothing very extraordinary in that; and I plead guilty to a little mild loo, at which I lost the trifling sum of twenty-five pounds, but I will solemnly swear that I went to bed at half-past six this morning, and no one can call that dissipation. No, my health is giving way; I never was very strong. I am breaking up."

Jack laughed.

"A man stays up all night drinking and smoking," he said, "and wonders that he is seedy the next day. But wake up; I want you to come and dine with me."

"Can't eat," said Sir Sydney, with a melancholy shake of the head. "But where is it?"

"Oh! with a friend of mine, Mr. O'Rafferty of Magdalen."

"That's very Irish, isn't it?"

"Rather," replied Jack with a smile.

"Will he make me laugh?" asked the baronet. "I want to laugh."

"Come and see, or rather come to my rooms when you are ready. I want to write a letter," said Jack.

It was arranged they should go together, and Jack went to his own staircase. He found a letter from Emily, containing an invitation from Mrs. Travers, to a grand ball she was going to give that day three weeks.

Emily begged him not to miss it.

"It will be a grand affair," she said in her letter. "We are to have an Indian prince and his suite; his name is Prince Pompom Chatnagowrie. No expense will be spared, and we shall have such fun. Do, dear Jack, write and say we may expect you."

"I shall be there," was Jack's mental exclamation.

Punctually at six, he and Sir Sydney found their way to O'Rafferty's rooms, where, to Jack's surprise, he saw Kemp.

Jack introduced his friend, and O'Rafferty exclaimed—

"Delighted to see you, Sir Sydney. That is my friend, Mr. Kemp; thought you would like to meet a man of your own college."

"We have met before," replied Sir Sydney, looking coldly at Kemp.

Jack gave him a formal nod, as he could not be rude to him, meeting him as he did at a mutual friend's, O'Rafferty not being supposed to know that they were not on a friendly footing.

Kemp was in fact the only one in the university whom Jack disliked now Davis was dead and gone.

He knew that Kemp was a friend of Hunston's, and fancied they would try to avenge Davis's death of which he was the innocent cause.

The dinner was placed on the table; the covers lifted, and a roast leg of lamb, spinach and potatoes revealed to view.

Then followed the second course.

To everyone's astonishment, this also consisted of roast leg of lamb, spinach, and potatoes.

No one made any remark; the conversation flowed on gaily, though neither Dawson nor Jack talked to Kemp more than they could help.

At length came the third course.

This also consisted of roast leg of lamb, spinach and potatoes.

O'Rafferty began to laugh.

"Gentlemen," he said, "they say open confession is good for the soul, and I owe you an explanation. We are victims of a singular combination of circumstances.

"I must tell you that I have a running account at the Mitre, the Clarendon, and the Randolph hotels, but my tick is not so good as it was.

"I went this afternoon to the 'Mitre,' where they told me they could only afford to send me one course; I really must not be so extravagant, etc.

"Accordingly I went for course number two to the 'Clarendon,' and the 'Randolph.' I left the choice of dishes to them, and as lamb and spinach are in season, I suppose they all imagined they could not send me anything nicer.

"I am sorry you should have had too much of a good thing, but I hope you will not be ashamed to look a lamb in the face the next time you take a walk in the country."

Everybody laughed.

Dawson declared he never got tired of lamb.

And Jack politely said he could live on it for a month.

After dinner, Jack rose and apologised for having to go away.

"I have an appointment," he said, "to read with my coach. I can come back in a couple of hours."

"Oh, throw him over!" cried O'Rafferty. "Tutors were invented to worry us poor undergraduates."

"I have thrown him over so often that I must keep faith this time, or he will give me up."

"Very well, go thy ways," said O'Rafferty. "We shall expect you, when you have done."

"Mr. Harkaway," said Kemp, "have you heard the news, may I ask?"

"What is it?"

"The report about the University Bank in High Street."

"No."

"Well, I have heard there will be a run on it, and as the manager is friendly to university men, I should advise you to see him and draw out quickly your cash."

"Thanks," said Jack, and putting on his livery, as he called his cap and gown, he left Magdalen, and walking quickly soon came to the private residence of the manager of the University Bank.

Knocking at the door, he was answered by the porter.

"What is it, sir?" inquired that personage.

"I want to see the manager," replied Jack. "Is he here?"

"Yes, sir; he has stopped much longer than usual to-night. All are out but him; he is still in his private room to the left."

"Shall I go in?" asked Jack.

"Certainly, sir. Mr. Barber, our manager, is always glad to see college gentlemen. Just knock at the door, if you please."

While he was talking to the porter in the imperfect light of the passage, Jack fancied he felt something or some one crawl past him.

Looking towards the door, he indistinctly saw a man rise to his feet, glide down the steps, and disappear in the night.

"Who is that?"

"Did you speak, sir?" asked the porter.

"I fancied I saw some one leave the house," answered Jack.

"Not likely, sir. I should have seen anyone pass me. It's your fancy," said the porter. "Go straight on, sir, and open the second door on the left."

With a strange misgiving at his heart, Jack walked forward.

Going to the door, he knocked.

There was no answer.

He knocked again with the same result, and becoming impatient, he pushed open the door, which was ajar.

The lamp was burning with a shade over it, close to the manager's desk; and though the table, upon which were bundles of papers, was well-lighted, the other part of the room was in semi-darkness.

For a moment Jack could not see objects distinctly.

But when his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, he started back.

Lying on the floor was the body of the manager, Mr. Barber, in an apparently insensible condition.

He had received a blow over the head, from which the blood did not flow, and this circumstance induced Jack to believe that he was only stunned, and not seriously injured.

An open safe stood near the wall.

The condition of its contents led to the supposition that it had been recently rifled, and a large amount in gold and notes abstracted from it.

This was afterwards found to be the case.

Jack became alarmed.

Should the manager come to himself and see him there, he would suppose he was the thief.

He did not know what to do for a moment.

Retreating rapidly to the passage, he encountered the porter, who exclaimed—

"Have you seen Mr. Barber, sir?"

"Yes," said Jack. "Robbery if not murder has been committed here; but hurry in and see."

"I must have your name, sir, before you go."

"Never mind my name," answered Jack. "I'll call again. Good-night."

With this he hurriedly quitted the house, and reached

the cold street; but his brains were on fire, and he felt in a fever.

"I shall know him again," chuckled the porter, rubbing his hands. "Those as put up this job know how to do things. I'm to have a hundred pounds for my share, and that will about make a man of me. Oh! that one-armed un is as smart as a weasel. He can do it."

He paused and chuckled again.

"Want to fix the robbery on this young gent, I suppose, but I'm not to say too much until I'm told. All I have to say at present is that a Oxford gent came to see the manager. He went in, and I thought I heard a fall. He came out quick, and wouldn't give his name, and looked flurried, telling me he hadn't seen the manager. I might recognise him, and I might not. That's my lesson, and now I'd better go and see to Mr. Barber."

If Jack could have heard the porter's reflections, he would have seen that he was the victim of a detestable plot.

He was too much upset to go and read with his tutor that evening, so he wended his way to his rooms to be alone and think.

All at once he felt in his pocket for his pass-book.

It was gone.

In his alarm he had dropped it on to the floor.

Then all at once a chain of evidence rose before him.

The manager of the University Bank had been attacked and stunned while working late, and during his insensibility much valuable property had been abstracted.

This was the crime.

Jack had been told by Kemp to take his pass-book to the manager; he had put it in his room; the manager had not seen him or it, for he was senseless.

In addition to this, Jack had foolishly said nothing to the porter, and in a guilty manner had refused his name.

The circumstances looked very suspicious against him.

Then he recollected the gliding figure coming out of the house.

"It is a plot," he cried, "it is a plot. Why cannot these fellows leave me alone?"

As he spoke half aloud, he was crossing the quad of St. Aldate's.

A hand fell upon his shoulder.

He started again. Were the officers of justice after him already?

"You are right," exclaimed a voice. "It is a plot."

Turning round, he found himself confronted by Kemp.

CHAPTER LV.

JACK IN THE TOILS.

KEMP's voice was never at any time very melodious, but it grated on Jack's ears with more than its usual harshness.

"I heard," said Kemp, "as I came along from Magdalen that the University Bank manager had been robbed."

"What has that to do with me?" asked Jack, hotly.

"A great deal, my dear fellow," answered Kemp. "Shall I tell you?"

"If you like."

Jack had a strong inclination to knock Kemp down, yet he wished to know exactly what he intended to do; then he might defeat his enemy as he had done before.

"The porter at the house," replied Kemp, "has found the manager insensible from a blow on the head, and a large sum of money has been abstracted from a safe. I heard the porter give the alarm to the police as I passed."

"Well?"

"The only person who has had access to the manager's room since the last of the clerks left was a university man in cap and gown, and he declares he can swear to his features."

"Well," said Jack, again laconically.

"You have just quitted the house," continued Kemp, "and you took your pass-book with you there. By the way, where is it?"

"I dropped it in the manager's room," replied Jack, incautiously.

A flush of triumph mantled Kemp's face.

"Harkaway," said Kemp, bitterly; "you ought to know by this time how deadly I hate you, and that I would never lose a chance of ruining you. Have you

forgotten how the best men in St. Aldate's cut me through you?"

"Serve you right."

"Did you not," pursued Kemp, heedless of his interruption, "did you not beat me when I rode the Duke of Woodstock's horse?"

"Serve you right," again said Jack.

"Were you not the cause of Davis's death?"

"No; he brought it on himself. He was as big a blackguard as you are."

"I know I am what you and your friends call a blackguard, but I want to drag you down to my level, and more than that, to get some money out of you," returned Kemp.

"I haven't got any," said Jack; "but I have a mind to knock you down."

"That doesn't matter. I have my plan, and it is necessary for me to have you in my power. You see that I can easily have you accused of this robbery and sent to prison."

"Hunston did it. I saw the one-armed brute leave the house!" cried Jack, indignantly, shaking Kemp by the collar.

"You can't prove it because you haven't any evidence," replied Kemp, freeing himself from Jack's grasp.

"Nor can you prove anything against me."

"Can't I? Just listen to what I have to say. Not prove anything? That's the mistake you make. I have plotted this thing for a month, and managed that it should come off the first evening I met you. If you had not been a fool, you would have cut me clean long ago, whenever you met me."

"Am I a fool?" said Jack, biting his lips with vexation, and again advancing with his arm raised to strike Kemp.

"Of course you are," said Kemp, moving away from Jack. "All honest, straightforward, open-hearted fellows like you are, or men like me couldn't get the best of you."

"Thank you for the compliment. I don't think I ever did a really scurvey thing in my life. If I did, it wasn't done purposely," said Jack. "But," he added, "you haven't got the best of me, yet."

"It looks very much like it," said Kemp. "The man that let you in is in my pay, and one word from me will

make him pitch upon you as the supposed robber. I prove that you were there in the manager's room. I found you half an hour afterwards in St. Aldate's quad. If you did not commit the robbery, why did you not raise an alarm when you saw the state the manager was in?"

Jack was silent.

"Exactly what I expected," said Kemp. "You cannot answer."

"What do you want? I defy you," exclaimed Jack, angrily. "Do your worst. What do you think of that? I'll fight you!" he continued, his passion rising.

"No, you won't," replied Kemp, calmly. "You are a little raw and excited, that is very natural. You will sleep over it, and to-morrow you will think very differently. Go to your rooms, old fellow, and expect me to breakfast to-morrow."

"I like your cheek," said Jack.

"I shall come to breakfast, I tell you, and I will bet you six to four I am admitted. Remember, you are in my power, and to-morrow we will talk over matters."

As he spoke, Kemp waved his hand and walked away.

Jack was left standing by himself, the prey of conflicting emotions.

Slowly he made his way to his rooms.

Kemp had laid his plans well this time, and circumstances had favoured him to such an extent that Jack did not see his way out of the difficulty.

"Well," he muttered, "it's no use breaking one's heart. I will wait till to-morrow. Perhaps I shall lick him yet; but it is an infamous thing for a man to do. I never heard or read of such a cool, calculating, vindictive villain."

To his surprise, when he entered his rooms, he saw O'Rafferty talking to Monday.

"Do you hear, you black beauty?" said the Irishman.

"Yes, sare," replied Monday, grinning from ear to ear.

"If you say a word, I'll kill you."

"Me say nothing, sare."

"There's your five bob then," answered O'Rafferty.

"Hillo!" exclaimed Jack, who could not make head or tail of this brief conversation, "who expected to see you here?"

"As you did not come back, as Kemp went away, and

as the lively baronet went to sleep like a pig on my sofa," answered O'Rafferty, "I thought I would come and give you a hail at your diggings."

"You are welcome," said Jack. "Sit down and make your miserable life happy. What's your liquor?"

"I never drink any thing less than champagne when I visit my friends," replied O'Rafferty.

"Monday, open some Moet and Chandon," said Jack.

"Excuse me a moment," continued Jack, "will you? I want to ask my servant a question."

"Certainly."

"Have you been to see Mr. Harvey to-night?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sare."

"How is he?"

"Him much better. Missey Hilda say the doctor very well satisfied, sare."

"That's all right. Did you take the grapes and things, and say I should come to-morrow?"

"Yes, sare, it am all right."

"Then make yourself scarce," said Jack.

Monday departed and left the collegians together.

Jack wasn't at all sorry of his new friend's society, for he wanted some one to cheer him up.

Kemp's threats lay upon him like a nightmare.

"Now," exclaimed O'Rafferty, "you must come back with me; coffee will be ready at nine, if my scout is sober enough to remember my orders."

In vain Jack pleaded a headache; his friend would take no refusal, and they walked back to Magdalen.

During the walk O'Rafferty said—

"I am going to a ball in a week or two, and if you will come with me, you shall see some fun. Mrs. Travers——"

"Who?" asked Jack, quickly.

"Mrs. Travers, of Oakley Wood, near here, has sent me an invitation. Do you know her?"

"I have heard the name," replied Jack, thinking to have some fun if he concealed the actual state of his intimacy in that quarter.

"Oh, I am hand and glove there," continued the volatile Irishman. "We are related. What the deuce the exact degree of relationship is I can't tell you, but I have

a vague idea that my mother and Mrs. Travers were somebody's nieces, and if that wouldn't make me a sort of cousin of Mrs. Travers, why, by jabbers, I don't understand the case at all, at all."

"I'll accompany you with pleasure," replied Jack, who said nothing about the invitation he had received already from Emily.

"You shall, me boy," replied O'Rafferty.

"What sort of people are they?"

"Mrs. Travers is a widder, you know," answered O'Rafferty, who spoke with a little of the Irish brogue after indulging in a bottle or two of wine; "and she lives with a companion, a sweet, pretty colleen they call Emily."

Jack smiled to himself.

"Whist, my boy!" said the Irishman. "No poaching there. I'm smitten, and I fancy that Emily is rather pleased with your humble servant's addresses."

"The deuce she is!" cried Jack.

"Yes," continued O'Rafferty. "I've got a way with me, Harkaway, that knocks all the women over before me. I've only got to whisper in their little pink ears, give them a squeeze of their tiny hands, pay them a few compliments, and they fall before me like pheasants before a breechloader in a hot corner in a wood."

"Does Emily really like you?" inquired Jack.

The foolish fellow was actually getting jealous.

"Like me?" said O'Rafferty, who was one of those men who are very fond of talking about ladies, and declaring that they are loved, though the ladies have only been decently civil to them.

"Yes."

"Is it, does she like me? Me, dear boy, she's madly in love with me. I don't know that it will ever come to anything, because, you see, she has no chips, and being poor myself, I want the money."

Jack felt inclined to kick him.

But he restrained the impulse.

"You must introduce me to Emily," he answered. "I fancy I have heard a friend of mine speak of her, and say that she was engaged to some university man."

"Doesn't care a snap of the finger for him, sorr," cried the Irishman, excitedly.

"Indeed," said Jack, slowly.

"No, no; I'm A 1 there. You shall very soon see."

Jack could not help smiling, because he knew very well that Emily was really devoted to him, and that O'Rafferty was only talking nonsense in speaking as he did.

If he could not believe in Emily's love, he would cease to believe in anything at all.

Wishing to push him a little further, he said—

"Is this Miss Emily pretty?"

"Well, me boy, she's not strictly beautiful; her eyes are good, but her mouth's bad, rather too large, and her eyes are not quite big enough; her nose, to my mind, turns up a bit, and her hair is rather coarse."

Again the inclination to kick O'Rafferty came over Jack.

"I'll tell her what you say," he exclaimed.

"Och! and she won't belave a word of it, not she," replied O'Rafferty. "I'm the boy in that quarter, and if you cut me out, I'll give you a five-pound note, poor as I am."

"Will you?"

"Yes."

"That's a wager. If Emily doesn't speak to you all the evening of the ball, without my permission, you pay me five pounds."

"That's it," said O'Rafferty.

"Stake the money," said Jack.

"That would puzzle a sinner like meself," answered O'Rafferty. "For I take the saints to witness that I haven't so much in my possession by four pounds nineteen and sixpence."

"Nonsense!" said Jack. "Are you really hard up?"

"Stumped, me boy. Hard up's no name for it, and I'm too proud to beg for it."

"Beg!"

"I call borrowing begging; there is no humbug about me. Borrowing money is the polite way of begging."

Jack put his hand in his pocket, and drawing out two ten-pound notes, gave them to O'Rafferty.

"Will you let me lend you these?" he said.

O'Rafferty looked at him for a moment, as they stood in the middle of the High Street, being about to come over to Magdalen.

Then he burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. This Jack could not understand.

CHAPTER LVI.

KEMP'S PROMISED VISIT.

"WHAT'S the matter?" asked Jack. "I never saw such a funny fellow as you are. I offer to lend you a couple of tenners, and you laugh at me."

"I can't help it, me dear boy," replied O'Rafferty. "It's taking your last good-bye of them ye are."

"How's that?"

"Hand them over. I'm proud, but I'll pay you in some way or other. If ye don't get it in meal, ye shall have it in malt, but me humble means never allow me to pay in cash."

"Never mind that; pay me when you can," said Jack, good-naturedly.

"That'll be when I marry an heiress. It will come some day. I've got such a winning way with me."

O'Rafferty took the notes and put them in his pocket.

They were now reaching the Irishman's room, and at the foot of the staircase, O'Rafferty seized Jack's hand and wrung it.

"You're a real good fellow," he whispered. "I never pay, I've told you that; but by the piper that played before Moses, I won't forget ye."

Jack returned the pressure of his hand, feeling that if the Irishman was poor and somewhat reckless, he wasn't bad-hearted, and that he could rely upon his friendship and native wit in a crisis.

"Heaven knows," he muttered to himself, "that I want a friend badly enough just now."

When they entered O'Rafferty's sitting-room, they found Sir Sydney Dawson still asleep on the sofa.

"Hist!" exclaimed the Irishman, taking up a champagne cork and blacking its edge in the fire.

He approached Sir Sydney and deliberately ornamented the sleeping baronet's cheeks, nose and forehead with black smudges.

"That's quite artistic, I flatter myself," he exclaimed. Presently the baronet, hearing voices, woke up and yawned.

"I've been asleep, it seems to me," he said. "Really I must apologise for my uncouth behaviour."

He walked to the fireplace, and looked in the glass.

In a moment he saw that some one had been playing a trick upon him.

"Who has been amusing himself at my expense?" he inquired, as an angry flush crossed his face.

No one made any answer.

"Mr. O'Rafferty," continued Dawson, "my face has been blackened whilst I slept, and I must tell you that if you are the author of what I call an outrage, it is a gross breach of hospitality."

"Me dear fellow," replied O'Rafferty, "it was only a joke."

"I don't like such jokes."

"Well, well, it will wash off."

"This is the first time I have seen you," continued Sir Sydney, "and by Jove! I'll take care it is the last. If you were not in your own room, I don't know that I shouldn't kick you."

"Don't let that be any obstacle," said the Irishman, readily. "I'll go into the quad and wait for you."

Turning to Jack Sir Sydney said, in an angry tone—

"I don't thank you either, Harkaway. This sort of thing is not friendly, and I am sure you are the last to approve of buffooning."

Jack did not reply.

"You at least stood by and saw it done."

"Perhaps I was wrong," said O'Rafferty, "and I apologise, me boy. If it comes to rudeness, you know, why, you were rude to sleep when you came to visit me. You admitted as much just now. Go into my bedroom and wash it off."

Sir Sydney did so, and then put on his cap and gown.

Making a stiff bow, he moved to the door.

"Don't go, Sir Sydney," said O'Rafferty.

"I intend to go, and I will take very good care our acquaintance ends here," replied the baronet. "I detest practical jokes."

"And I love them. See the difference between us

Good-night, me boy, if, you won't stop. We shall survive the affliction," said O'Rafferty.

Sir Sydney went away in high dudgeon, and Jack did not stay long after him.

The latter had great difficulty in sleeping that night, for his mind was at work, and he kept on thinking of Kemp and the new difficulty in which he had involved him.

Nearly all night he lay awake.

Towards daybreak he fell into an uneasy slumber, which was broken by a loud cock-crow.

Currook, currook, currook a roo-o-o.

"Bless the fowls," he said, crossly. "I didn't know anyone kept such things in college. "I'll complain to the dons."

Again rang out the shrill note.

Currook, a roo, a roo-o.

Jack jumped out of bed and was convinced that the sound came from some quarter of his own apartments.

A diligent search informed him that at least two cocks were shut up in his cupboard.

He looked everywhere for the key, but could not find it.

Reflecting a moment, he remembered the conversation between Monday and O'Rafferty.

"That's it," he exclaimed. "The infernal Irishman has bribed Monday to say nothing about it, and he has brought some cocks, and perhaps some hens, and put them in my cupboard. Bother him."

Sleep was out of the question.

The cocks kept on crowing one after the other.

Currook, c'rook, c'roo-o-o sounded every half-minute, until poor Jack was very nearly distracted.

He tried to kick in one of the panels of the cupboard, which for some time resisted his efforts.

At last it gave way.

A stately game-cock stepped out and flapped its wings, singing "currook, curr-oo-o."

It was followed by another.

Jack made a dash at the first one, which becoming alarmed, flew on the mantelpiece and knocked down the clock and two lustres under a glass shade.

Smash went the lustres.

Away flew the cocks, with Jack after them, round and round the room.

He tumbled over the furniture, broke chairs, upset the table, smashing several bottles and glasses, and at last caught one cock as it flew up against a picture, which it brought to the ground with a doleful crash.

A second chase had the same result.

Both birds were eventually captured and secured.

It seemed a very long time till Monday made his appearance.

Jack saw him and threw the teapot at his head.

"Mind um head, Mast' Jack," cried Monday, ducking on one side.

The teapot was followed by the milk-jug, which struck him on the forehead and covered him with its contents.

"What um throw things for, sare?" asked Monday, dripping with milk.

"You villain," said Jack; "you took a bribe to let Mr. O'Rafferty put cocks in my cupboard, and keep me awake the whole night."

Monday held down his head in a very crestfallen way.

He had been found out.

"Get out of my sight, and don't let me see you again all day," continued Jack; "if you do, something will happen to you."

"But, Mast' Jack——"

"You dare to argue with me, and see what you'll get. Be off."

Monday slunk away, much to Buster's gratification, for the latter was delighted with his disgrace.

"Buster," said Jack.

"Yes, sir," replied the scout.

"If anyone comes, say I'm not up, and can't be disturbed. Do you hear?"

"Cert'n'y, sir; not at home to nobody."

Monday, in going away, had left the door open, which permitted a man to enter without knocking.

"You forget me," he said, with a blank smile.

Jack turned his worn and haggard face towards him, and recognized Kemp.

"I told you I should come to breakfast. Sorry I am late, but I daresay your scout can knock me up an anchovy toast and a couple of eggs," continued Kemp.

Jack hesitated a moment.

Then turning to the scout, he said—

"Get Mr. Kemp some breakfast; after that you can go and sport my oak."

In ten minutes the breakfast was ready, the outer door shut, and Jack alone with his enemy.

Kemp had paid his promised visit.

Lighting a pipe, he waited till Kemp had just finished his breakfast, and then said—

"Now, sir, I am at your service. Make your business as short as possible, or I shall not answer for the consequences."

Kemp deliberately took out his cigar-case, lighted a cigar, and crossing his legs as he threw himself back in an arm-chair, prepared to speak.

CHAPTER LVII.

JACK OUTWITS KEMP.

HAVING finished his breakfast with a much better appetite than Harkaway had found for his, Kemp smoked his cigar slowly, and began business.

"I suppose," he said, "that you have thought over the state of affairs, and come to the only possible conclusion?"

"What is that?" asked Jack.

"Simply, that you are in my power, and are fixed so tightly that you can not escape."

"You have concocted a very strong plot," Jack said.

"Never mind the violent adjectives. I am thick-skinned, and don't mind abuse. It only wastes time."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "what do you want me to do?"

"If you remain quiet, and put yourself in my hands, I will tell you."

There was no reply.

"Silence gives consent. Am I to suppose you are willing to buy my forbearance?" asked Kemp.

Jack did not reply.

He was concocting a scheme by which he should entrap Kemp and Hunston.

"You can't prove your innocence," Kemp continued.

"You went to the bank, and the porter will swear to you as the supposed robber if I tell him to. If I do not tell him, he will not say any thing."

"What do you want?" cried Jack.

"How much money can you get?"

Jack thought a moment.

"I don't think I can get any," he answered. "All I have is fifty pounds, and that is to last me some time."

"Give it me; you must get into debt. I want five hundred. Write home for some, and borrow the rest."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jack, between his teeth, "you are a villain."

"Of course I am, and I feel proud of it. Give me the cheque."

"If I do, it will be only on certain conditions."

"Let me have the money first," replied Kemp; "then, if your conditions are not unreasonable, I will agree to them."

"These are my conditions. I shall have to write home for the greater part of the cash, and the governor will very likely send notes. Now I want you to keep those notes in hand. Keep them from circulation for some time, for I don't wish the governor to think I am going ahead too fast."

Kemp thought a time.

At first Jack's coolness puzzled him, then he ascribed it to perfect recklessness, for was not Jack about to commit himself still more deeply by giving him the hush-money demanded.

"I agree," said he. "I am not hard up for cash at present, and will keep the notes three months, at the end of which time they will be paid into the bank."

This being settled, an appointment was made for the second morning from that, and the two parted.

The eventful morning came.

Jack was prepared with the notes, the numbers of which he had copied.

He had also done some thing to the notes, but what must be a secret for the present.

Kemp came.

"Well, have you the cash?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Jack; "it is here."

And he handed the other a roll of notes.

Kemp counted them, examined the water-marks, and found everything correct.

"By-bye!" said he. "You will see me at the ball."

He sauntered out and Jack followed him.

In the quadrangle a tailor met Kemp.

"Really, sir, I must have money," he said.

"Well, here is a twenty-pound note for you. Be off," said Kemp, handing him one of those he had just received from Jack, who at that moment stepped forward.

"Oblige me, Mr. Schultz, by making a memorandum of the number and date of that note," said he.

"What folly is this?" Kemp asked, fiercely.

"Silence! I mean to have my own way a little," said Jack.

The astonished knight of the needle, who did not know what to make of this, read aloud from the face of the note—

"No. D. F. 120,009."

"Good," said Jack, making a note in his book.

The tailor bowed, and hastened away, and Jack, turning to Kemp, said—

"You must understand, Mr. Kemp, that I will have you keep your promise. By taking the money of me, as the price of silence, you have reduced yourself to the position of my accomplice in any crime I may have committed, or, at any rate, you are an accessory after the fact."

"Curse you!" said Kemp. "I did not think you were so artful."

He slunk away, and Jack proceeded after the tailor, who was easily persuaded to exchange his bank-note for another which our hero offered him.

Jack went into an hotel to have some refreshment.

The topic of conversation there and everywhere was the bank robbery.

Things were coming to a pretty pass in Oxford, everybody thought.

First of all an undergraduate was stabbed on the Iffley Road; then the Jew, Manasses, was murdered for plunder, and after that came the attack on the bank manager and the robbery of the safe.

As for Mr. Barber, the manager, he could remember nothing.

He was writing letters quietly at his desk, when an attack was made upon him from behind, which caused him to lose his senses, and he recollected nothing more until the porter and a policeman were bathing his face with cold water.

The porter declared that a university gentleman had called at the bank about the time the robbery must have been committed, and had gone in and out of the private room.

He thought he could identify the gentleman.

It was impossible that all the men up at Oxford should be mustered together like malefactors, so that he might pick out the delinquent.

All that could be done was for the police to take his description of the collegian.

This was a young man rather stout, good-looking, amiable in appearance, a moustache and whiskers just making their appearance, shaven chin, well dressed, and having a strong manly voice.

As there were several score of men in the university who answered to this description, the police did not see their way.

Most people disbelieved the porter's story, and declared their opinion that he himself was connected with the robbery.

Jack returned to his rooms.

He had got the best of Kemp.

In his own mind he resolved that he would not rest till he had brought the whole matter to light.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MRS. TRAVERS' PARTY.

JACK had not been home long before Sir Sydney Dawson called upon him.

Harkaway had, with the spirit of youth, recovered his good temper.

Advancing to Dawson, he shook his hand, and said—
"This is jolly of you. I thought you wouldn't cut me because O'Rafferty played jokes."

"I don't like it, though. You must shunt that man," replied the baronet.

"He didn't mean anything."

"The fellow is a perfect mountebank, a regular Hottentot. I shall have a row with him when I meet him. I couldn't kick up a row in the man's own room when I was his guest, but I felt most infernally riled."

"Enough to make you ; but it's only his way."

"And a very unpleasant way, too. I never allow anybody to take liberties with me. I can't bear being touched," exclaimed Sir Sydney.

"He is always playing tricks upon somebody."

"I'll lay odds he gets his head punched. Has he been up long?"

"I don't know. I only met him yesterday for the first time," said Jack.

"Upon my word, Harkaway, you are a most remarkable fellow," replied Sir Sydney. "You pick up a man who is nobody-knows-who, and go to dine with him the same day, and, more than that, you take me, the most particular man in Oxford. I shall fight shy of your invitations in future."

"I didn't know that any harm would come of it."

"You've got common sense, haven't you?"

"Hope so."

"Use it then in future. Why don't you make a friend of your scout, or pick up a potman at a pub. By Jove! the 'varsity is coming to some thing," said Sir Sydney, stretching himself on a sofa.

"I fancied that every Oxford man was a gentleman," replied Jack.

"Then you make a huge mistake. The place swarms with cads. You can't be too particular. Some colleges are more select than others, but the cads creep in everywhere. Oxford is public, you know, and coming up is only a matter of money, or sometimes cheek, for fellows come up upon next to nothing, try for money prizes, get into debt, and, if they fail, take their names off, and the Oxonian world sees them no more."

"You are becoming quite poetical," said Jack, laughing.

Sir Sydney was about to reply, when Monday ushered in O'Rafferty, who seemed in high spirits.

"Ah, Harkaway," he exclaimed, "how do ; Sir Sydney, your servant. Sorry for the cork business last night ; but I'm a county Cork man. Ha, ha ! that accounts for it ; and at least it must be a satisfaction to you to know that you are not so black as you're painted. Ha, ha, ha !"

"My good sir," said Sir Sydney, raising himself on his elbow, and staring insolently at the Irishman through an eye-glass, "I will thank you to address your conversation to Mr. Harkaway, whose friend you appear to be."

Turning to Jack, O'Rafferty exclaimed—

"That is a very disagreeable friend of yours. Can't you get rid of him ?"

Sir Sydney got up angrily.

"I'll bet a pound to a penny," he said, "you are not a gentleman."

"That's what you may call sovereign contempt," replied the Irishman. "But really you are very difficult to please. You tell me to talk to Harkaway, and then you are not satisfied."

Sir Sydney Dawson took his handkerchief from his pocket, dusted the sole of his boot with it, and then coolly threw it in O'Rafferty's face.

The Irishman's blood boiled.

He could not bear such an insult as this.

Throwing himself upon Dawson, he bore him to the earth, and would have pummelled him had not Jack dragged him off.

Jack seemed to have the strength of two ordinary men.

Standing between them, the giant of the river and cricket-field said—

"Gentlemen, I will have no fighting in my rooms."

The two men glared at one another.

"Understand this," continued Jack, "that I will floor the first one who attempts to strike the **other**."

"I am satisfied," said Sir Sydney, shrugging his shoulders, adjusting his gown, and putting on his cap, which had fallen off in the struggle.

He moved towards the door, where he stopped.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Harkaway," he continued, "to have been the cause of a disgraceful riot in your place, but the fault is not mine."

"I'll be hanged if it's mine," said O'Rafferty. "I come with an apology, and, be jabers, I'm insulted."

Haven't I the best Irish blood in my veins? Wasn't me ancestors kings? By the powers——"

"O'Rafferty, oblige me by holding your tongue," said Jack.

"Or ye'll knock me down, eh?"

"I will, by Jove."

"That's an oath," exclaimed the Irishman. "You are too big for me, and I've no quarrel with you, but as for that spalpeen with the tuft tassol, if ever I get the chance, I'll kick him from here to the bogs of Kerry."

Sir Sydney, with his feathers ruffled, went away, and the Irishman threw himself into a chair, bursting out laughing.

"I think I shook all the wind out of him," he said. "But after all it was me own fault. If you will play jokes, you must take the consequences. I lost one of my front teeth once through it, but I'll kepe on till the day of me death, and now what shall I do with his rag?"

He looked at the handkerchief which had been so insolently tossed at him.

"I'll hang it out of me window, which looks on the High, and I'll write on a piece of paper, 'The White flag, Sir Sydney Dawson's colours.' If he don't call me out after that he's a cur."

"I don't think Dawson will fight," replied Jack.

"Why not?"

"His nerves are shaky, and it's tit for tat after all."

"So it is. We'll let it alone, but I'll hang the flag out. No, I won't, I'll play him another practical joke," exclaimed O'Rafferty laughing.

"I wish you had been at the—somewhere before you put those cocks in my cupboard," said Jack.

"I, dear boy?" replied O'Rafferty with affected simplicity.

"You know you did it."

"Well, I plead guilty. Did you sleep well?"

"Not a wink all night. So if you'll oblige me by taking your hook, I'll turn in," replied Jack.

"All right, don't forget the Travers' ball. I've got lots of fun on there, and I'll introduce you to Emily, the divine little Emily."

"Good-bye," said Jack impatiently.

"You're in a deuce of a hurry to get rid of me," cried O'Rafferty. "But no matter; I'm o, p, h."

"What's that?"

"Off; that's our way of spelling it. Bye-bye."

The Irishman went out of the room, and Jack, undressing himself, turned into bed to get that rest of which he stood so much in need.

The next week passed without any further incident.

Jack recovered his serenity, and completed the insurance of his life in Kemp's favour, by which Kemp would gain three thousand pounds, if Harkaway died.

By this means Kemp had a direct interest in Jack's death.

Harvey grew gradually better, though he could not leave his room yet.

All his friends visited him daily, and Hilda waited upon him like a nurse, in a way that showed that she took more than a sisterly interest in him.

The rich and lovely widow of the Duke of Woodstock made a greater impression upon Harvey day by day.

He loved her dearly.

Did she return his affection?

Time will show.

Sir Sydney Dawson and O'Rafferty did not call one another out, though when they met, they looked very stiffly at one another.

The day appointed for Mrs. Travers' ball drew near.

Both Jack and O'Rafferty got leave from their college authorities to stay away for a day or two.

They drove over together early in the morning, as O'Rafferty declared his relative, Mrs. Travers, would never get on without him.

The Prince Pompom Chatnagowrie was coming with his suite, and great efforts had to be made to receive him.

All the county families near were invited to meet his highness.

It was to be a grand affair.

Throwing the reins to a groom, Jack, who drove jumped down from the trap and entered the house, on his arrival, followed by O'Rafferty.

Emily was alone in the morning room, and, seeing Jack, threw herself into his arms, saying—

"Dear Jack, I am so—so glad to see you."

He kissed her tenderly.

"My pet!" he replied, "my darling! It seems an age since we met."

Looking up, Emily saw the Irishman, and blushed.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "there is Mr. O'Rafferty."

"He says you are in love with him, Emmy," remarked Jack laughing.

"Don't mind him, me dear," replied O'Rafferty, looking rather foolish. "It's a way he's got."

"Mr. O'Rafferty's a relation of Mrs. Travers," answered Emily, coldly, "but a very slight acquaintance of mine."

"Oh, you young rascal!" said the Irishman. "You never told me of this. You have been making fun of me."

"Own you were wrong, and apologise," said Jack.

"I'll own anything you like; let us be happy. If Miss Emily does not love me, she likes me; don't you, my dear?"

"I don't like or dislike you," answered Emily.

"I'm a nice man, am I not?"

"I have seen nicer."

"Now you're cruel. I'll pay you out, see if I don't. But shake hands," said O'Rafferty. "All I did was to have a bit of fun with our friend Harkaway here. I knew he was the 'varsity man you were engaged to all along. Sure you are the loveliest little darling in all Oxfordshire."

"I don't want your stupid compliments, Mr. O'Rafferty, so you had better keep them for some one who will appreciate them," replied Emily.

"Oh, be jabers!" exclaimed the Irishman, "this is a frost. I must be off till the thaw comes. It's no thanks I'll get for standing between two lovers. Spoon away, my beauties; I'll go and help Mrs. Travers to prepare for these beknighted Indians who are coming to-night."

He left them together, and they were not sorry at his departure.

When Jack explained to Emily how O'Rafferty had talked about her, she could not refrain from laughing.

They enjoyed one another's society until lunch time, when they went into the dining-room.

Mrs. Travers was already there, and O'Rafferty, who had been out for a walk, entered shortly after.

At the same moment the sound of carriage wheels was heard.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Travers, "these are the Chutneys. You know, dear Emily, I asked Mrs. Chutney to allow the girls to come early. The major and herself will follow later. Such nice girls you will find them. Do you know the Chutneys, Mr. Harkaway?"

Jack and O'Rafferty looked blankly at one another.

The major was a very fiery-tempered gentleman, and he might prove very disagreeable.

Jack and O'Rafferty remembered their escapade on the river, and how they had made Major Chutney believe they were the surveyors for the Abingdon, Sandford and Iffley Extension Line of railways.

Mrs. Travers was obliged to repeat her question.

Jack replied hesitatingly—

"I think I have—a—seen them."

Emily looked suspiciously at him.

"Here's a go," he thought to himself. "That confounded Irishman is always getting me into some scrape or other."

The young ladies were ushered in, and shook hands, and kissed Mrs. Travers and Emily; then they saw the two gentlemen, to whom they bowed stiffly.

"Are you going to have a railway through your grounds, Mrs. Travers?" asked Miss Chutney.

"A railway!" repeated Mrs. Travers; "whatever put that idea into your head?"

"Because I see the surveyor of the proposed Abingdon Extension Line and his clerk at your table."

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Travers, "these gentlemen are from Oxford: one is Mr. O'Rafferty, of Magdalen, my cousin; the other, Mr. Harkaway of St. Aldate's, of whom you must have heard."

"Who has not heard of Mr. Harkaway?" said the younger sister, with a tender glance.

She thought of the squeeze of the hand Jack had given her.

"All I can say is," exclaimed the elder Miss Chutney, "that if these gentlemen are what you represent them to be, we have been grossly imposed upon. I know papa keeps a horsewhip, and I hope he will use it."

Mrs. Travers and Emily stared at them in amazement.

"Can you explain this, Patrick?" asked Mrs. Travers.

"Only a joke, my dear cousin," replied O'Rafferty.

"Miss Chutney is quite right. Delightful name Chutney—suggestive of pickles. We were on the river; we saw the Chutneys at lunch. We were hungry; we introduced ourselves."

"Under false pretences, sir," interrupted Miss Chutney.

"Your lovely faces must be our excuse," said O'Rafferty.

"Lovely faces indeed!" muttered Emily, crossly.

"Jack," said O'Rafferty, "I think we will leave the ladies to have a chat while we take a walk."

Jack was only too glad to make his escape, as the position was embarrassing, and Emily had given him a look he did not like.

She was jealous of the youngest Miss Chutney.

Following O'Rafferty, he soon found himself on the lawn, in the centre of which was erected a handsome pavilion for the reception of the Indian prince and his suite.

"Come inside and smoke a weed," said O'Rafferty.

"It was getting hot in there, and I thought it was good enough to cut it."

CHAPTER LIX.

O'RAFFERTY'S TRICKS AT THE BALL.

WHEN they were seated in the large tent, or pavilion, which was very tastily arranged with flowers, hanging baskets, and oriental hangings, Jack said—

"I am sorry we have been bowled out. Emily will not like me for taking part in your joke."

"Nonsense," replied O'Rafferty. "She knows me well enough to understand my playful disposition."

"Are you going to indulge in any fun here?"

"It's what I came for, me boy," answered the Irishman. "Just wait a bit, bide a wee, as our Scotch friends say. Here is my friend, James the footman; we will see how he has executed my commissions."

A tall footman entered the tent and advanced to O'Rafferty, who exclaimed—

"Have you made the cow all right?"

"Yes, sir, I've got the outrageousest, vicioussest thing as I could find," was the reply.

"What's that for?" asked Jack.

"I will tell you. My cousin, Mrs. Travers, is of a romantic and slightly pastoral turn of mind," said O'Rafferty, "and she has had a room at the top of the grand staircase fitted up as a stable. The cow is to be put inside, and a pretty milkmaid is to sit on a stool and draw new milk for any one who may want it."

"Then the cow is for that purpose," said Jack.

"Precisely, and if she doesn't upset stool, milkmaid and all, and then make a bolt into the ballroom and upset everyone else, it is not my fault."

O'Rafferty rubbed his hands with glee.

"You are sure, James," he said, "that it is a perfect beast."

"I'd back this cow, sir, against our coachman's wife, and that's saying a great deal," replied James.

"Good, and now have you brought the jalap?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give it to the cook with the half-sovereign, and tell her to put it in the macaroon cakes."

"All of it? Sir, there's a good lot."

"Every h'ap'orth," replied O'Rafferty.

"There's the arsenic, sir," continued James.

"Ah, yes; give that to me. It's for the fish. You know, Harkaway, or rather you don't know, that in the ballroom we have constructed a little river running all round the room, made of rock work, ornamented with lilies and ferns, and filled with fish netted from the lake. The arsenic is to poison them."

"What a shame? I've a good mind to tell Mrs. Travers," said Jack.

"Oh, you sneak! I shall have to hit you over the head with the poker, or do something dreadful to you, if you talk of telling," replied O'Rafferty.

"You have forgotten the cayenne pepper, sir," said James.

"Give it here," answered O'Rafferty; "that's to put on the floor of the ballroom, and make them all sneeze. Anything else, James?"

"No, sir, that is all you told me to get."

"What time is supper to be served for the black prince?"

"One, sir, cos they goes early."

"Very well. At ten minutes to one, let it be put on the table, or say half-past twelve. It's all cold, and can't hurt."

"I'll put it on at twelve, sir, and have it ready," replied the footman.

"That will do. Here is what I promised you. Keep your mouth shut," said O'Rafferty, handing him one of the notes Jack had lent him a week or so before.

James bowed his acknowledgments and went away.

"Isn't it rather too bad to do all this sort of thing, and upset the arrangements?" remarked Jack.

"Not a bit. It's fun; I'm a purveyor of fun. I may call myself a fun merchant; it's all in my line of business," replied O'Rafferty.

"Well, I shall have nothing to do with it."

"Why?"

"It's an abuse of hospitality."

"My dear Harkaway, you're a humbug," said O'Rafferty, mildly. "You will enjoy the fun as much as I shall, but you haven't the Irish wit to get it up or the pluck to help one."

"Does gentlemanly feeling go for nothing?" asked Jack.

"Not in fun."

"Well," said Jack, "I will have no hand in it."

"You are like the boy at school who gets another boy to let off the cracker for him. Never mind, let's join the ladies."

They returned to the house and found the ladies in an excellent temper.

Mrs. Travers had explained to the Miss Chutneys that O'Rafferty, her lively cousin, was a determined practical joker, and he and Jack were soon forgiven.

Emily took Jack aside, and said to him privately—

"The next time, sir, you meet a young lady under false pretences, do not squeeze her hand, because you may be found out."

"I didn't Emmy," replied Jack with his eyes cast down.

"No stories, sir, if you please. You are found out, and to punish you, I shall make you dance the first dance to-night, with Miss Chutney, and I don't know that I shall give you one till quite the end of the evening."

"Oh, Emmy dear, you are unkind," pleaded Jack.

"So I ought to be I think. My opinion is that Mr. O'Rafferty is a very bad companion for you," replied Emily.

Jack thought so too, but he did not say anything, and the conversation ended, as Miss Chutney and her sister were going, at O'Rafferty's soliciation, to make, as he whispered to Jack, "a noise on the piano."

Jack tried very hard to be gay and light-spirited, because he knew Emily would ask him a variety of questions, if she saw him sad, which he would have much difficulty in answering.

O'Rafferty was as amusing as anyone could wish.

The ladies listened to his conversation and laughed until dinner time, after which they retired to dress themselves for the ball; the two men followed this example, and were first to arrive in the ballroom.

Mrs. Travers had surpassed herself in decorating it.

The hall and staircase were filled with flowers and shrubs; on the landing stood the cow, fastened to an imitation manger by a halter; the floor was covered with straw, and the cow, much to her satisfaction, munched mangolds and turnips.

Around the ballroom was a miniature trout stream, the sides of which were made of cement and rockwork, and innumerable fish sported in the water, which was shadowed with ferns and lilies.

In the centre of the room rose a fountain of perfume, which, after ascending and making fragrant the air, fell into a glass basin, where the ladies could dip their handkerchiefs.

"Now," said O'Rafferty, "to work."

"Don't expect me to help you," replied Jack.

"I don't want you. Sit still," answered O'Rafferty.

Jack took a seat under some orange trees and shrubs, and watched his companion.

O'Rafferty walked round the imitation trout stream and dropped little pellets of arsenic and bread into it, which in an hour were calculated to destroy all the fish within.

On the floor he sprinkled a quantity of cayenne pepper.

In the scent fountain he put some lamp black and oil of tar, which, when stirred up, would be the reverse of agreeable.

Soon the guests began to arrive.

Mrs. Travers received them one by one in the polished and agreeable manner which was peculiar to her.

Among the first to come were the Prince Pompom Chatnagowrie and his suite.

Meeting this distinguished Indian rajah on the stairs, Mrs. Travers invited him to have some milk from the cow.

Prince Pompom bowed and was led in to the stable on the top of the stairs; the dairymaid began to milk, while the band struck up an inspiring strain.

Suddenly the cow kicked up her hind legs and sent the maiden sprawling on her back, while the pail with its contents flew up against the cashmere robes of the prince.

A jerk broke the halter, which held the cow, and the wild beast dashed away, upsetting the prince and Mrs. Travers, and creating fearful havoc amongst the suite.

Blinded by the glare of lights in the drawing-room, the animal charged down the staircase.

Many county families who were ascending were thrown violently backwards. Great was the screaming.

Terrible was the destruction of muslin.

A perfect panic reigned by this time. The cow reached the hall, having blundered downstairs only to be secured by the servants and led away.

Mrs. Travers was full of apologies to the prince.

His highness smiled blandly, allowed the milk to be wiped off his robes, and giving his arm to the mistress of the house, entered the ballroom, leaving his suite to recover themselves as best they could.

"Come, your highness," exclaimed Mrs. Travers, "and see my beautiful fish in real water. I am extremely sorry for the unruly behaviour of that cow, but you must forgive her. Cows, I believe, are sacred amongst the Hindoos."

"Madam," replied the prince, "I am a Mahometan."

He spoke coldly, and was evidently annoyed.

Mrs. Travers thought the sight of the fish would put him in good temper, but what was her dismay when she saw them all floating on the surface.

"Eh!" said the prince, "dead fish! Ah, very good, dead fish."

"They were all alive when they were put in. This is very singular," answered Mrs. Travers. "Will your highness condescend to take some refreshment?"

"Biscuit and glass of water, thank you," replied the prince still more coldly.

"Perhaps a macaroon would please you. James the macaroons for his highness," exclaimed Mrs. Travers.

At the entrance of the ballroom, the prince and his suite regaled themselves upon macaroons and water.

"Now," said Mrs. Travers, "you will dance the first quadrille with me, your highness. I will provide your suite with partners."

In a short time a double set was made up, and the dancing began, but it had not proceeded far before every one began to sneeze violently.

O'Rafferty, who was looking on, and sitting in a corner with Jack, said—

"The cow worked well, the fish are all dead, and now the pepper I put on the floor is making them all sneeze as if they had the influenza. What a happy day we're having."

"It's a shame," replied Jack.

"Not a bit. Look at the prince; he's hot. He wants to wipe his olive-coloured face, and goes to the fountain. The ladies follow the royal example. Watch 'em Jack! Bravo! they'll all be as black as niggers soon, and smell like a gas works."

O'Rafferty was right.

The laughing was so continuous, and the sneezing so impossible to stop, that the quadrille ended before it was half finished.

Everybody ran to the scent fountain, dipping their handkerchiefs in it, and smearing their faces with lamp black and essence of coal tar.

A great confusion arose.

The ladies looked at themselves in the mirrors, and retired in disgust to arrange their complexions.

It made very little difference to the prince and his suite, as they were Indians and naturally dark; but all at once the prince put his hand to his stomach, and bending down said to his prime vizier—

"I am bad inside!"

"So am I," replied the prime vizier, making a face, "very bad indeed, sire."

The members of the suite all put their hands on their stomachs.

Then the prince, followed by the whole of them, made a rush for the door.

Mrs. Travers could not understand it at all.

She stared blankly after them.

So did the company.

O'Rafferty laughed till his sides ached.

"That's the jalap in the macaroons," he whispered to Jack. "What a lark!"

"You are too bad," replied Jack, who could not help laughing too.

"Wait a bit, my dear boy. You haven't come to the end of it yet," answered the Irishman.

In time the prince returned and sat down with his suite.

The dancing proceeded without any further interruption, and Emily so far forgave Jack as to give him her hand for a waltz.

While they were waiting for the music to begin, she said—

"If you help Mr. O'Rafferty in his jokes, I shall be very angry with you. Mrs. Travers doesn't suspect him, but I do."

"What for, Emmy?" asked Jack innocently.

"Oh, a great many things. We have been nearly killed by a wild, savage cow; we have coughed and blacked all our faces; the fish are dead, and the poor Indians have been taken ill."

"It wasn't I who did it," replied Jack.

"But you are as bad, because you know all about it. Never mind; we don't often see one another, so I shan't scold you."

"That's right," said Jack, "don't."

"Tell me all about yourself, dear," she continued.

"How are you getting on at college?"

"Very well, thanks."

"Are you working hard?"

"Yes."

"Nothing to worry you, since that odious Davis died?" she asked.

"No," replied Jack.

"I am glad of that. Do you know when I first saw you to-day, I thought you looked sad?"

"Did I?" queried Jack.

"You did, indeed."

"Oh, it was nothing. Hard reading makes an alteration in a man, I can tell you, Emmy; I don't get enough exercise."

"It is silly to work too hard. Stop here a day or two, and have some shooting with Mr. O'Rafferty."

"I don't mind," answered Jack.

"I must leave you when the dance is over," she continued. "Because I have to dance with Lord somebody or other. I forget his name."

"Don't fall in love with your swell, Emmy."

"No fear," she replied, adding—

"Oh, Jack dear, you shouldn't say such things to me!"

"You know I love you, Emmy, better than anything in the world," he answered. "I'd kiss you if there were not so many people looking on."

"Go away, you stupid," she rejoined, as the music ceased, and the dance was over.

Reluctantly he gave her up to her next partner, and went to look for O'Rafferty.

He found him in the doorway talking to James the footman.

"Come on, Harkaway. I have no time to lose," said the Irishman.

"What are you up to now?"

"It's supper-time for the Indian swells, and I want to see that every thing is properly arranged for them."

He grinned as he spoke, and Jack guessed that he was engaged in some fresh mischief.

CHAPTER LX.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

QUITTING the ball-room, O'Rafferty led Jack to the lawn, where a handsome pavilion was erected.

The prince and his suite were to have supper there all by themselves, and various dainties which they liked were provided for them.

Being Mahometans, they would not eat the usual fare which found favour in the eyes of Christians.

O'Rafferty sent James up to the leader of the band, telling him and his men to come down at once and have their supper.

This order was gladly obeyed, and twelve hungry men were ushered into the pavilion.

"Now, my fine fellows," said O'Rafferty, as the musicians entered, "fall to; eat and drink what you like, but I can only allow you ten minutes."

"Thank you, sir," replied the leader; "we won't be longer than we can help."

Prodigious was the clatter of the knives and forks.

In ten minutes the board was cleared, and all the dainties, prepared at a great expense for the Indians, disposed of.

"Clear out!" exclaimed O'Rafferty, who had been holding his watch in his hand to time them, "and strike up a merry tune."

The musicians returned to their places.

Mrs. Travers had missed the music, but being told the men were gone to obtain some refreshments, thought the opportunity a good one to lead the Indian guests to supper.

"Come, prince," she said, just as the band returned, "you will see that I have done my best to give you a repast of oriental magnificence."

The Indians followed her to the pavilion.

What was their horror to see nothing but empty dishes and dirty plates!

Mrs. Travers uttered a scream of dismay.

"Who has done this?" she demanded.

The servants could give her no information.

Prince Chatnagowrie accepted her excuses coldly.

He had been nearly killed by a cow, blinded by red pepper, inconvenienced by jalap in his macaroons, and finally there was no supper.

He pleaded the lateness of the hour, and ordered his carriage.

In vain Mrs. Travers begged him not to rob her party at so early an hour of its most distinguished guest.

The prince was inflexible, and departed.

Mrs. Travers could have cried with vexation.

Jack had gone back to the ballroom, and was talking to Emily, when a footman informed him that his mistress wanted to see him.

She held a card in her hand, and said—

“A gentleman, whom I do not know, but who says he is a friend of yours, has arrived; do you know him?”

Jack looked at the card and read—

“Mr. Kemp!”

“Oh, yes, I know him,” replied Jack; “but I gave him no authority to come here.”

“It does not matter. I am at all times pleased to see any friend of yours,” replied Mrs. Travers, with a smile.

“I cannot talk to him though, for I am nearly heart-broken at all the disasters which have befallen me to-day.

“My Indians have gone away huffed; my cow was a failure; my dear fish are dead. Some enemy must have conspired against me. Go and welcome your friend and leave me to my grief.”

Jack expressed his thanks and went to the door, where Kemp was standing in evening dress.

“How dare you make use of my name and come here?” asked Jack, angrily.

“I asked your scout where you had gone; he told me, and as I thought I should enjoy myself at this ball, I hired a trap and came over,” replied Kemp.

“It’s like your impudence,” replied Jack.

“Isn’t it?” answered Kemp, with a laugh.

“I’ve a good mind to kick you out,” replied Jack, turning away.

Kemp followed him and said—

“Introduce me to that pretty girl in pink. Who is she?”

“That’s Emily.”

“Who’s she, may I ask?”

“The girl I am engaged to,” replied Jack, surlily.

“All right. I’ll see if I can’t cut you out in that quarter,” said Kemp, with an aggravating smile. “I’ve got a winning way with the girls; they all like me.”

“Don’t go too far,” remarked Jack, his eyes sparkling with suppressed rage.

Kemp hummed an air carelessly, and walked over to Emily, who was talking to old Major Chutney.

Jack remained by himself, and felt as if he could have flown at Kemp then and there and strangled the life out of him.

"They did it well, the rogues," Major Chutney was saying. "I quite took them to be what they said they were—railway surveyors. Ah, the rascals; they quite upset my wife and I for a few days; indeed, Mrs. Major Chutney wasn't herself for a week. But I forgive them for it. Ha! ha!"

Addressing himself to Emily, Kemp said—

"Pardon my introducing myself to you, Miss Emily. I am a college friend of Harkaway's, and he is too lazy to-night to do the amiable."

Emily bowed stiffly.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"A dance if you have one to spare," he replied.

"I am very sorry that my card is quite full up to supper-time."

"And after?"

"And even then, unless you have the patience to wait until the small hours of the morning."

She turned away, and again talked to Major Chutney, leaving Kemp looking very foolish.

He was cross and angry, and went back to Jack, who was biting his lips.

"Your sweetheart is not very amiable," he remarked.

"She would not dance with me."

"I don't blame her," replied Jack. "Girls don't like being taken by storm."

Seeing O'Rafferty at the other end of the room, Jack went to him, with a ray of hope in his heart.

Knowing his friend's talent for joking, he fancied he would help him to get rid of Kemp, the sight of whom at the ball made him feel wretched.

"Ah, me dear boy," said O'Rafferty, "I am like Hercules resting after his labours."

"Come and have a glass of cham., and you will feel like a giant refreshed. I want to talk to you," exclaimed Jack.

They went to the refreshment-room, and, sitting down, asked for a bottle of champagne.

"You know Kemp," continued Jack. "He is here, and has introduced himself through my name. I hate him. Can't you get rid of him in a pleasant way?"

"Let me see," answered O'Rafferty. "My fertile brain is a little exhausted."

He thought a moment, and then suddenly clapped his hands together.

"Be jabers! I have it," he cried. "My cousin's wart has done it."

"What?" asked Jack, laughing.

"Mrs. Travers has a wart on her cheek," continued O'Rafferty, "and out of that wart grow three long hairs."

"I never saw them."

"No, because she uses a strong depilatory to remove them. It's a frightfully strong mixture of burning chemical stuff, and when rubbed on hair, makes it come off quickly. That's the idea. Let us go and make everything ready for the victim. James!"

The footman happened to be in the refreshment-room.

"Here, sir," he said, hearing his name.

"Go and get a basinful of flour from the cook," exclaimed O'Rafferty.

"Yes, sir."

"And go to my cousin's bedroom—that's Mrs. Travers, you know—and bring me her bottle of depilatory. You will see it marked, 'The Depilatory, or Patent Hair-Destroyer. Poison.' Don't drink it."

"Not me, sir," replied James, going away to execute these orders.

When he returned, O'Rafferty led the way to a little bedroom opening on the stairs.

"This is my nest for to-night. Scrape off the label from the bottle. "Quick!" said the Irishman.

Jack did so with the aid of a knife.

"Now it's scented hair-oil. Do you see?"

"Not yet," replied Jack.

"Wasn't it a lucky thing I thought of my cousin's wart? We'll soon settle Kemp's hash. Oh, bally-smashum! bothero! Won't he kick up an illigant shindy?" exclaimed O'Rafferty, dancing with glee at the prospect of what he was going to do.

The hair-destroyer was placed on the table, a candle lighted, and the confederates went out.

"You go and bring the victim out here. Let him stand on the stairs. Keep the martyr in conversation until I give an Irish war-whoop," said O'Rafferty.

Jack nodded, and going into the ball-room, found Kemp talking to Emily.

She smiled as Jack came up, and said—

“Really, this gentleman is extremely persevering ; he is boring me to death to dance with him.”

“Give him one dance presently, Emily,” replied Jack, with a wink.

“If you wish it, I will. Mr. Kemp, I shall be at your service after the ‘Lancers,’ which are just about to begin,” said Emily.

“Thanks, very much,” answered Kemp.

He took Jack’s arm, and the latter led him towards the stairs.

“That’s what I call civil of you,” said Kemp. “You’re a good slave, and beginning to know your work.”

Jack flushed at this insolence.

“Don’t talk to me like that,” he said, fiercely, stopping on the stairs.

“Suddenly a mass of flour fell down upon Kemp’s head and shoulders, nearly blinding him.

“Hurrah for ould Erin ! chu-r-rup !” was heard up above.

“What the deuce is that ?” cried Kemp, furiously.

The next moment O’Rafferty was patting his head and rubbing the flour in, on the pretence of rubbing it off.

“My dear boy,” he said, “I am very sorry, but the basin dropped out of me hand. It’s only flour, and the ladies wanted it to whiten their pretty faces.”

Getting his eyes open, Kemp replied—

“I wish to goodness you wouldn’t play your infernal tricks upon me.”

“By the sowl of me grandmother, and that’s an oath, it was an accident,” said O’Rafferty. “Come to me room, me dear boy, and wash it off.”

Kemp suffered himself to be led away to the little room on the stairs.

Here the depilatory or hair-destroyer was awaiting him.

O’Rafferty’s face sparkled at the expectation of what was coming.

As for Jack, he returned to the ballroom, determining to leave the Irishman to his own devices.

He felt sure that the detested Kemp was in good hands.

Leading the victim of the practical joke into the little

bedroom opening from the staircase, O'Rafferty pretended to be very much vexed at what had happened.

"It's so confounded awkward," he said, "to have oneself covered with flour—nasty stuff flour."

"Very," answered the victim.

"But we will soon have it off," continued the volatile Irishman. "Put your head in this basin. So, I will wash your hair with hot water, and here is some stuff my cousin, Mrs. Travers', maid has brought me, which is good for one's thatch. It's some sort of oil. Will you have a little on?"

"If you please," replied Kemp.

He held his head in a proper position, and O'Rafferty began to scrub away at his hair with a nail-brush.

"Shish, s—shish," he muttered, as if he was grooming a horse.

"I say," cried Kemp suddenly.

"What, me boy?" asked O'Rafferty.

"Isn't that oil stuff rather hot?"

"It can't be, oil's cooling. It's the water, me innocent. We'll turn you out beautiful for ever. Madame Rachel's a fool to me. S—shish, s—shish."

The process went on for another minute, and Kemp's hair began to come off in bunches under the influence of the hair-destroyer.

Already he was bald in several places.

"Confound it! how my head smarts," said Kemp.

"Stings, does it? That's the flour. Perhaps it was adulterated with cayenne pepper; the thieves of bakers will do any thing in these days."

"I'm extremely obliged to you for your kindness," said Kemp. "But if you will give me a towel, I'll have a rub."

Pouring the rest of the depilatory over the victim's head, O'Rafferty handed him a towel.

With this Kemp rubbed his hair vigorously.

He looked like a mangy dog, with bare patches all over his head.

After the final rubbing with the towel, there was scarcely a hair left.

He went to the glass to look at himself, and uttered a howl of dismay, mingled with anger.

"God bless me!" he exclaimed, "what's the matter with me?"

"Eh!" said O'Rafferty, as if he did not understand him.

"Where's my hair?"

"By the powers!" said O'Rafferty, "it's as bald as a coot you are. What could have done that? The oil must have been the thing my cousin keeps—a depilatory—to take the hairs off her mole, and they have brought me the wrong stuff. Be jabbers! it's lucky you used it instead of me."

"What am I to do?" asked Kemp, blankly.

"Wigs are cheap."

"Wigs! I wear a wig! It's my opinion, sir, you have done this on purpose."

O'Rafferty placed his hand on his heart.

"On the honour of an Irishman——" he began.

"You've got no honour, sir!" shrieked Kemp.

"On the word of an O'Rafferty, my dear boy——"

"You're a scoundrel, and I'll be revenged," thundered Kemp.

"This is bad language, and a worse return for my kindness, Mr. Kemp; I've done with ye," answered O'Rafferty, with dignity.

"Done for me, you mean. What can I look like without any hair on my head?"

O'Rafferty gaily hummed a negro melody, and sang—

"'For he had no wool on the top of his head, in the place where the wool ought to grow.' It's annoying, me boy, to have no wool, but a bald head's a nice thing on a summer's day for the flies to settle on."

"I'll have my revenge," cried Kemp, fiercely.

He seized the candlestick, and rushed upon O'Rafferty, who was exploding with laughter, and who cleverly dodged a blow that was aimed at him.

Then the Irishman ran on to the staircase, followed by Kemp, who was soon stopped by a crowd of people going down to supper.

Seeing a sealskin cap hanging on a peg, he put it on, and thus hid his ungainly appearance.

By this time O'Rafferty had disappeared.

Pushing his way into the supper-room, which was crowded, Kemp sat down, thinking he would smooth his ruffled feathers with a glass of champagne and the leg of a chicken.

Though his head was smarting, and he remembered

very well he had lost his hair, he forgot that he had a seal-skin cap on.

To wear a cap in a supper-room, before nearly a hundred guests, was a gross breach of etiquette and decorum. Loud murmurs arose.

A gentleman spoke to Mrs. Travers, and Mrs. Travers spoke to the gentleman.

The gentleman rose and rapped his knuckles on the table.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said.

Kemp had just finished a tumbler of champagne, and had helped himself to half a chicken.

"There is a person in this room," continued the speaker, "who has dared to sit down at this table, in the presence of ladies, with a sealskin cap on."

"Hear, hear!" cried the company.

"I request that person to remove the obnoxious cap," concluded the speaker.

Kemp went on eating his chicken, not thinking for a moment that he was the subject under discussion.

The murmurs increased.

It was clear that a storm of indignation was brewing.

"Sir," thundered the speaker, "I call upon you to take off your cap."

A footman touched Kemp on the shoulder.

"What is it?" asked Kemp, "lobster salad? Very good. Give me some on a clean plate."

"Caps isn't allowed in perlite society," answered the footman, "and you've got to remove yours."

"I can't," replied Kemp.

"He says he can't," said several voices.

"Why not?" demanded the speaker.

"Because I'm bald," answered Kemp, glaring fiercely around him.

There was visible agitation amongst the ladies.

"Footman," said Mrs. Travers' friend, "take off that man's cap, and turn him out."

In an instant the cap was removed.

Kemp sprang to his feet, and shaking his fist in the footman's face, threatened to strike him.

"You base-born scoundrel!" he exclaimed; "how dare you lay your vile hands on a gentleman? Take that, and that, and that!"

The footman, hit heavily by Kemp, rolled over on a side table, and brought down a pile of plates with a crash.

All the ladies screamed loudly.

Mrs. Travers nearly fainted, and the gentlemen rushed towards Kemp.

"Turn him out! Kick him out!" they all cried. "Show him the door! Out with him! out with him!"

Bereft of his sealskin cap, and looking as wild as a madman with his head shaved, the wretched Kemp knocked down another footman or two, and dashed away like a hare hunted by the hounds.

Gaining the passage, he darted upstairs.

The deserted ballroom was no safe refuge, so he made his way into the conservatory, which was pleasantly filled with orange trees and exotic shrubs, mixed with flowers, which shed a delicious fragrance around.

Here he thought he could find refuge, and consider what was best for him to do.

An odious practical joke had been played upon him.

Of this he felt certain, as O'Rafferty must have known what he was doing when he put the depilatory on his head.

He had been chased from the supper-room, and would certainly be kicked out of the house, if any one found him after supper was over.

What to do for the best he knew not, and the wretched man was nearly distracted.

Suddenly he stopped in the centre of a perfumed grove of orange and lemon trees, for he heard voices near him.

Surely he could not be deceived.

The voices were those of Harkaway, Emily, and O'Rafferty.

Peering carefully through the scented branches, he saw the three standing together, preferring an agreeable chat in the conservatory to the noise and bustle of the supper-room, where they could descend when the crush was over, and the appetites of some of the guests were satisfied.

Kemp listened.

Something told him that he was the subject of their conversation.

"You should have seen him, my dear," said O'Rafferty.

"He was as bald as St. Patrick, and as wild as a Kilkenny cat. 'Sir,' says he, 'you're a scoundrel!' 'By

the word of an O'Rafferty and the honour of an Irishman,' says I, when he stopped me, and says, 'I've lost my hair.' Of course he had. I promised Jack to serve him out, and when I see him in Oxford, I'll ask him the price of wigs."

"So," thought Kemp, "I have to thank Master Harkaway for this. Very well; *my* time will come."

"I think," said Emily, "that Mr. Kemp is a bad man, because he was the friend and associate of Hunston and that poor fellow Davis, who is dead."

"Bad!" replied Jack, almost fiercely. "That Kemp is the biggest scoundrel that ever walked the earth. He'd rob a church."

"Or take the sugar out of a canary bird's cage," suggested Emily.

"Or the pence out of a blind man's hat," replied O'Rafferty.

They all laughed.

Kemp's face became demoniac in its expression.

"I'll give you something to cry about presently," he muttered between his clenched teeth, and shaking his fist in their direction. "You don't chaff me for nothing, and make merry at my expense."

"It's an infernal shame," continued Jack, "that such a fellow should be allowed to remain at the University."

"But, Jack dear," said Emily, mildly, "there must be a black sheep in every flock, must there not?"

"I don't see the necessity," answered Jack, "and if I were the shepherd of the flock, I would jolly soon kick the sheep out."

"Leave him to me," said O'Rafferty; "I have a talent for settling unpleasant people. Will you deliver Kemp over to the tormentor—that's me?"

"And that's not grammar," put in Emily, with a smile.

"Shall I say that's I, or that's myself, sweetest of thy lovely sex?" answered O'Rafferty; adding, "The fact is, I am one of those men who can rise superior to grammar."

"Never mind Emily," said Jack. "She likes to nag a little occasionally. I deliver Kemp over to you. Show him no mercy."

"Not a ha'p'orth, me boy. He's a gone coon, and has seen his last gum tree," replied O'Rafferty.

Kemp went down on his hands and knees, and crawled between the large tubs that held the branching trees.

He approached Emily, who was standing with her back to him, in her muslin ball-dress, looking very gauzy and fairy-like.

Drawing a wax match from his pocket, he struck it gently, and held it under her skirt, lighting the inflammable material in three places.

Then he retired in the same snake-like, gliding manner.

"Ha, ha!" he cried to himself; "we shall see who will laugh the longest—Harkaway and his friends, or I."

All at once it became apparent that a thick smoke was arising from that part of the conservatory where the three friends were standing.

"There is a smell of burning," said Jack, looking round uneasily.

"I hope the house is not on fire," remarked Emily; adding, "Is this one of your tricks, Mr. O'Rafferty?"

"No, indeed," he replied. "Fire is one of those things I never play with."

"Oh!" exclaimed Emily, all at once; "it is behind me. I am quite hot. Dear Jack, do please see if there is anything the matter with me."

In a moment Jack was at work.

A quick glance in her direction showed him that her dress was in flames.

It was horrible to think that his darling Emily might be burned to death.

With the rapidity of lightning, he took off his coat, and, forcing her violently backwards, made her lie upon her back, and threw the coat over her.

This would not have been sufficient, had not O'Rafferty seen a large tub of water standing close by.

Taking it in his arms, he staggered under its weight to the spot where she was lying, and poured it over her in streams.

"Oh, help! help! for the love of heaven! I am burning—burning!" she cried, piteously.

Then she lost her senses.

The water, however, effectually extinguished the fire, as there were several gallons inside, and she was completely deluged.

"Roll her over; serve her all over alike," said O'Rafferty. "That's your sort, man. She's out. Gad! I ought to have been a fireman. Bravo!"

Jack rolled her in the water, which was streaming all over the floor, and had the satisfaction of seeing that she was in no further danger.

He fell on his knees and supported her loved head on his arm.

"God be thanked for this great mercy," he murmured, raising his eyes piously to the star-studded firmament, which was visible through the glass roof of the conservatory.

O'Rafferty was not a man of very strong religious tendencies, but he answered fervently—

"Amen!"

CHAPTER LXI.

A DAY'S SHOOTING.

KEMP did not dare to stay to see the result of his villainous work.

He hoped that he had burnt Emily to death, because he would thereby inflict pain upon Harkaway.

If he lingered in the ball-room he would become an object of suspicion, so he ran into the hall, put on the first hat and coat he could find, and went to the stables to find his coachman, which, having done, he got into his conveyance and was driven back to college.

Emily was carried by Jack and O'Rafferty to her bedroom, where the lady's-maid, assisted by Miss Chutney, who was summoned privately, so as not to alarm Mrs. Travers and disturb the party, undressed her and put her to bed.

Very anxiously did Jack wait until Miss Chutney came in.

"Is she hurt?" he asked, eagerly.

"Not much," was the reply. "A little scorched, but nothing serious. We have applied oil and flour to allay the pain. She's a little hysterical and nervous through the shock, but there is nothing to fear. How did it happen?"

"That is just what I can not make out," answered Jack.

"There was no light anywhere near her, and unless she trod upon a match, which had been carelessly dropped, I can't think how it came about."

Slipping away from the ballroom, which was again crowded with guests, supper being over, Jack went to Emily's room.

"Hush, sir," said the maid. "She is asleep."

Jack sat down by the bedside, and watched over her till nearly morning, when he retired to rest, and slept like a top till O'Rafferty woke him.

"Arouse ye then, my merry, merry men, it is our breakfast time," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "We are going out shooting, you and I. With great perseverance I have discovered a couple of guns of ancient make, which seem warranted to burst on very slight provocation."

Jack smiled.

"I'll go with you if Emily is better," replied Jack.

"The young lady in question is at the present moment presiding at the tea-urn, and begs me to say that, bar a little pain, she is all right, the shock not having seriously affected her nervous system."

"That is good news. Just slope, will you, while I get into the bath, I shall be down directly; I say, tell Emmy not to make my coffee too sweet," said Jack.

He was delighted to find that Emily was not much hurt, and gladly fell in with O'Rafferty's propositions about a shooting-party.

Mrs. Travers had a small estate, upon which there was not much game, as she did not go to the expense of a keeper.

The Irishman cared very little whose land he went upon, as long as he got a shot at some thing.

Armed with rusty, but still serviceable guns, and well supplied with powder and shot, the two started on their expedition.

"I am afraid we shall come to grief," remarked Jack.

"If I only see the tip of a rabbit's ear or a feather of a pheasant's tail, I am, in the word of the poet, 'on to it like grub,' or, as the vulgar would observe, 'like the bee on to the honeysuckle,'" said O'Rafferty.

They walked several miles without seeing any thing, and both the young men began to feel the amusement rather slow.

"I should like to get a shot at some thing, hang me if I shouldn't," said Jack.

"Ditto in this direction," answered O'Rafferty.

"Whist! me boy, look at those ducks in that pond; a couple of dozen of beautiful Aylesburys, I'll swear."

"Yes," said Jack, looking in the direction indicated, "and there is the owner watching them."

A stout, sleepy-looking man was leaning against some railings round a pond, upon whose placid surface a score of ducks disported themselves.

"Morning, governor," said O'Rafferty.

"Same to you, young master," was the reply.

"Those are fine ducks."

"They be all that."

"What will you let me have a shot at them for? Will you give me ten shots for a pound?"

"Gi'e me the p'und," said the man.

O'Rafferty handed him a golden sovereign.

"There is the bullion!" he exclaimed. "Now then, I may blaze away till all's blue, and have what I kill."

"I'll have the same," said Jack. "Ten shots for a quid. Catch, master."

He tossed a sovereign over to the man who, with a sly chuckle, dropped them into his pocket, and walked away.

"Turn and turn," continued Jack. "You begin, and I'll have second fire."

"Here goes, me boy; death to ducks is my motto, when I go out for a day's shooting."

Bang, bang, went the guns.

Quack, quack! screeched the ducks, whose bodies soon began to float on the surface of the pond.

"That's my last," said O'Rafferty, at length, "and I've potted six, while only five have fallen victims to your weapon of destruction. This is what I call sport."

"Let's have another sov.'s worth," replied Jack.

"I'm game if you are. Here, master," exclaimed O'Rafferty, addressing the farmer-looking man, who was a hundred yards off.

"What be it now?" was the answer.

"May we have another ten shots at those ducks?"

"You may have as many shots as you please, young gentlemen," said the man. "Them dooks don't belong to me. I am a stra-anger in these parts; Abingdon's my

whoam. Here come the vearmer they belongs to, and perhaps he'll have something to say to you. He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You old villain!" exclaimed O'Rafferty. "By the bones of my grandmother—and that's an oath—I should like to give you something to remember me by."

"Neatly sold, by Jove!" said Jack biting his lips. "There is two quids gone and the prospect of a row into the bargain. Look at the farmer coming this way; he looks awfully riled."

"Let's hook it," observed O'Rafferty.

"Stop and tell the truth," replied Jack. "Where is the man we gave the money to? The old beast has sloped off somewhere. Hang the old cheat!"

Suddenly the farmer began to run, and brandishing a large stick, cried to a big ugly dog, half bull, half mastiff, which Jack perceived for the first time.

"Hie onto 'em, lad! Loo, loo, Gripper! Hie on, Grip, lad! Stick to 'em, stick to 'em!"

"I don't like the look of that dog, Harkaway," said O'Rafferty, nervously.

"Nor I. Is your gun loaded?"

"No."

"Nor mine, worse luck, or I'd shoot him," said Jack.

"Figuratively we are up a tree; let us get up one literally. See that larch overhanging the water, with a sloping trunk?"

"Yes."

"Up you go, then, after me, like greased lightning. Quick, me boy, and we'll have some sport with the farmer. Mind your gun; don't leave that."

O'Rafferty led the way up the tree, which, as it was half down, and leaning a good deal over the water was not difficult to climb.

He was followed by Harkaway, and soon the confederates were safely ensconced in its leafless branches, with the water beneath them, the sky overhead, and in front a snarling dog, with his bared gums showing his white teeth, and a corpulent farmer, wild with rage, shaking a big thick stick, as if he was paid so much for doing it by the hour.

"Morning 'fearmer.' Cold, isn't it?" said Jack, chafing.

"I'll make it warm for you, before I've done with you," answered the farmer. "What do you mean by shooting my dooks?"

"We paid a man two pounds to let us shoot at them. He said they were his."

"Gammon. I don't see no man, you're a couple of young blackguards, that's what you are."

"Me good sir!" exclaimed O'Rafferty. "Are you aware that you are speaking to the Prime Minister of England and the Lord Chamberlain?"

"You are very exalted," replied the farmer. "I'll have you out of that. It's time that old tree came down, and a ducking wouldn't hurt you. I'll leave the dog to mind you while I go for a man and an axe. Shoot my ducks, will you? I'll duck you."

Shaking his stick again, the farmer said to his dog—"Mind un, Grip; mind un, lad," and walked off as quickly as he could.

The dog planted himself at the foot of the tree and looked savagely at the captives.

"It's a nice dog, but I'm afraid he must go where the good niggers go," exclaimed O'Rafferty, coolly.

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why, he must be potted. While the farmer is absent, we can escape. Hand up the powder and shot."

Jack did so, and O'Rafferty loaded his gun.

Then he took a deliberate aim at the faithful animal, who rolled over dead, being shot through the heart.

"Now's your time—quick!" said the Irishman. "Away wid ye, me boy!"

He and Jack were soon in full flight across the country; nor did they stop until they had placed a couple of miles at least between them and the fatal pond.

All at once they espied a pretty-looking little house, half hidden amongst some trees, and they halted.

"Do you see that thing in the hedge?" cried O'Rafferty.

Jack looked, and saw something small and brown dodging about in the hedge bottom.

"It looks like a pig," he replied.

"Whatever it is, I mean to have a shot at it," answered the Irishman.

Raising his gun to his shoulder, he fired.

There was a faint shriek, which evidently came from a human voice, and all was still.

"Dead as mutton, I'll lay odds," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "Let us go and examine our game."

Scarcely knowing why, Jack reluctantly advanced, feeling as if O'Rafferty's indiscriminate shooting had this time brought them into some trouble.

Advancing a few yards further, they got through a gap in the hedge, and O'Rafferty ran forward, crying—

"There it is!"

"What is it?" inquired Jack.

O'Rafferty made no answer.

He placed the butt of his gun on the ground, and leant pensively on the muzzle while he regarded the object which was stretched out in all the silence of death before him.

It was a child, nearly black, of Indian birth.

"This is manslaughter," said O'Rafferty. "But who the deuce expected to see black children running about in this country?"

"I'll tell you what," cried Jack taking the little creature in his arms; "it's one of Mole's children. He lives somewhere about here. Good God! what have you done!"

"Killed the youngster, sure enough. I'm very sorry for it, but how could I know?"

"Mole won't be sorry."

"Who is this Mole?" asked O'Rafferty.

In a few words Jack told him all about Mr. Mole and his marriage in Limbi with Ambonia, their subsequent meeting in Oxford, and Mole's flight from the university to study science and build a balloon.

"A balloon?" said O'Rafferty. "Then that round thing is it I expect."

Jack looked to the right, and saw a huge balloon, inflated with gas, having a car attached, which was nearly completed.

The machine was held to the earth by three strong ropes.

Almost at the same moment, a tall lady dressed in white, but having black hands and face, emerged from the house, and directed her steps towards the two intruders.

"That's Ambonia," said Jack, "and she is a tigress. Look out for squalls."

O'Rafferty stood irresolute, not knowing what to do, and then placed the child in the car of the balloon.

CHAPTER LXII.

IT IS ALL UP WITH MRS. MOLE.

"You talk to her; she speaks a little English," said Jack, "while I go and see old Mole."

"Very well," replied O'Rafferty.

O'Rafferty carelessly held the gun in the hollow of his arm, and awaited the approach of Ambonia.

"Ha!" she exclaimed; "why for you come poach on my husband's ground?"

"Madame," replied O'Rafferty with a low bow, "I assure you that nothing was further from my mind than poaching."

"But you got shoot gun. I hear it shoot—bang! What you kill?"

O'Rafferty did not answer.

She passed him, pushing him rudely on one side.

"My very dear madam," said O'Rafferty, "what can I say to appease your wrath? Listen to me."

Ambonia had held one hand concealed under her apron.

Withdrawing it, she displayed a revolver with five chambers.

"This pistol," Ambonia said, "it loaded. I can with pistol kill. You mind; look out there; let me go."

O'Rafferty fell back.

Ambonia got up the pair of steps which gave admittance to the car, the latter being about six feet from the ground.

Suddenly she uttered a piercing shriek.

She had discovered the body of her dead child.

For a moment she was overwhelmed with grief, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the little black child shed bitter tears.

Then thinking of the murderer, for such he was in reality, she said to herself in her own language—

“Revenge first, grief afterwards.”

She looked around for O’Rafferty, and presenting the pistol at him fired.

Fortunately for him, she was not a good shot at any time, and her excessive agitation made her hand tremble.

The aim was a bad one, and the bullet missed its mark.

Again she fired.

O’Rafferty sprang from side to side like an harlequin in a pantomime.

“Och, by the powers!” he muttered, “she will do me an injury. It’s kilt entirely I am, if the saints don’t interfere.”

A third shot whistled harmlessly past his left ear.

It made a sort of noise he did not like.

“You kill my child, I kill you,” shouted Ambonia, covering him again.

O’Rafferty saw an axe lying on the ground, which had been used by the workmen in constructing the still unfinished car of the balloon.

Seizing it, he dealt a blow at one of the ropes, and severed it.

The balloon swung over on one side.

Rushing to another rope, he cut that.

Bang! shish!

A fourth bullet went through the crown of his felt hat.

“Fiends take the woman!” he cried, nervously. “That’s a near shave, and ten and sixpence worth of good felt spoilt.”

The balloon now inclined at an angle of thirty degrees.

Another vigorous stroke, and the third rope was cut.

The vast machine slowly righted itself, and began to ascend towards the sky, bearing a little south-east before the cold wind.

“Help, Isaac, help!” shouted Mrs. Mole, discharging the last barrel of the revolver with the same bad success, and then throwing the empty weapon at O’Rafferty, striking him on the shin, and making him howl like a banshee before death.

“Oh, plague take it!” he cried, ruefully, “she has barked my shins. What a wretch! but it’s a comfort that

she's going where she will be more appreciated than she is here. "Good-day to you, marm, and a pleasant voyage."

Slowly the balloon ascended.

Ambonia's tall figure could be seen leaning over the car; she was shrieking, and making furious gestures.

At this moment, Mr. Mole appeared with Harkaway.

Both were open-mouthed with surprise at seeing the balloon disappear, not knowing as yet that Ambonia was in it.

"What is the meaning of this, and where is my black wife?" asked Mr. Mole.

"It's all up in a balloon, my boy, with Mrs. Mole, I'm afraid," answered O'Rafferty.

"How is that?"

"She is in the balloon, which I set adrift to save myself from being shot by her revolver."

"Is it possible?"

"The child, whom I also had the misfortune to injure under a mistake, is also with her."

"My dear sir," cried Mr. Mole, grasping his hand, "I beg to thank you most warmly for ridding me of—No, that is not right; I mean this is very sad. I lose my beloved wife and my poor helpless child at one fell stroke. It is a pity you did not put the other little negro in the car—No, I am wrong; I mean to say there is one left to console me, should I never see its poor mother again. I am your friend for life, my dear boy—No, I mean your enemy for——"

"You may say what you like to O'Rafferty, sir," interrupted Jack. "We all know you must be glad to get rid of Ambonia; so what's the use of any humbug? Take us indoors and give us some champagne."

"Let me see the last of her," replied Mr. Mole. "That balloon will go up, up, up, until it is miles and miles over the earth. Mrs. Mole will float in space; let her float; let her float."

Gradually the balloon became a mere speck on the horizon.

"I had thought of flying in that machine myself," said Mole, with a sigh, "and finding a refuge in foreign lands, but now that Ambonia and one of her beautiful infants have gone—I trust for ever—I will resume my position at

Oxford, and once more devote my life to the study of my favourite classics, and the coaching of freshmen."

"Bravo!" replied Jack. "Mole is himself again."

"Have you missed me, Harkaway?"

"We have been very dull without you, sir."

"That is pleasing. Come to my house; you shall have the glorious vintage of champagne, Mr. O'Rafferty, for you are my friend. Give me your hand, sir."

They shook hands warmly, and walked towards the house.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A DAY OF ADVENTURES.

UNDER the influence of sundry bottles of champagne, which Mole opened regardless of expense, the spirits of all three rose.

Harkaway said that he hoped Mole would not feel angry with O'Rafferty for what he had done.

"The fact is," he continued, "O'Rafferty sent your wife into the air in self-defence, as she was taking cool shots at him with a revolver."

"My dear John," replied Mr. Mole, "so far from being cross with O'Rafferty, if he will permit me to address him so familiarly——"

"Go on, sir; I feel as if I had known you all my life," put in the Irishman.

"Thank you," replied Mole; "I feel that you have done me a service. To have lived much longer with that odious black heathen in this Christian country, would have driven me mad, and I was only trusting to the completion of my balloon."

"For what?"

"To escape in the night. She is worse than Xantippe, the famous shrew of old times. Oh! the life that woman has led me; look at my face, still disfigured from recent scratches, and if you could see my——"

Jack coughed.

"Why do you cough, Harkaway?" asked Mr. Mole. "I was only going to say my ribs. If you could see them, you would find them black and blue, from fre-

quent kicks and punches. Ambonia is a fiend, and after living with her, no man need fear anything worse than death."

"What will become of her?" asked Jack.

"If she does not let the gas out, she will attain a certain height, and then float about in space till she starves to death. If she knows how to manage the machine she may reach the shores of some foreign country. But that is doubtful. However, she is gone, and I am free."

Mole's delight was intense.

It was a little unkind and unchristian, perhaps, but really some excuse ought to be made for a poor bullied, cowed-down, henpecked wretch, such as Mole had become.

Ambonia had shown him no mercy.

She bullied him morning, noon and night, and struck him whenever her own sweet will prompted her to do so.

In addition to this, she did not allow him to have any friends; and insulted everyone who came into the house, without any further provocation.

"I think I could dance," said Mole, "my heart feels so light."

"Give us a break-down, sir," exclaimed Jack.

"I will try; fill up your glasses. For let the bottle pass, and we'll drink another glass, to the maids of merry England," cried Mole, excitedly.

"That's right, sir. You remind me of old times now," remarked Jack. "Go it, sir. Give us one of your favourite twisters."

Mr. Mole executed a fantastic dance; and as the wine had got into his head, the natural consequence was, he became giddy.

The final result being that he fell back on the table, which tumbled down with a crash, and he lay under a shower of bottles and glasses.

Picking him up, Jack said—

"Wake up, sir."

"Let me be, Harkaway, I am very happy," answered Mr. Mole, with an imbecile smile.

"We are out shooting," continued Jack, "and must finish our day's sport. Will you come, sir?"

"I may be a little excited, but I am not drunk, Hark-

away," replied Mr. Mole. "If you ask me to join you in the chase, I reply unhesitatingly that I will do so."

"Have you got a gun?"

Mr. Mole raised himself upon his elbow.

"Certainly I have. A very formidable weapon, ancient, but still serviceable. It's of the blunderbuss order, and would kill a buffalo."

"Get it out, sir, and come along—the evenings close in soon now."

Mr. Mole rose, took a glass of brandy to steady his nerves, and attired himself for the chase with leather gaiters, a loose shooting-coat, and a large-muzzled gun.

Thus equipped, he left the house, giving the remaining child in charge of the servant, saying that Mrs. Mole had gone for a trip with the eldest child in the balloon, and he did not know when she would return.

The servant did not see any thing wonderful in this, as her mistress had shown herself to be very eccentric on several occasions.

Ambonia had beaten her with flat-irons and rolling-pins.

It had cost Mr. Mole several pounds to induce the servant to forego a prosecution in the police court.

Therefore the woman was no more sorry at her mistress's disappearance than Mole was himself.

The three sportsmen went out in high spirits, and walked a couple of miles talking and laughing gaily.

"Here we are at the property of Squire Western," said Mr. Mole. "He's a strict preserver of game. Mind what you are about."

"That's a likely-looking wood for pheasants," said Jack.

"Cut in," said O'Rafferty. "Leave Squire Western, and his keepers to me."

Mole shrugged his shoulders.

A hare got up, O'Rafferty fired, and the animal rolled over dead.

"Home they brought the wild hare dead. First to the boy?" said O'Rafferty, picking up the spoil.

All at once a stern voice exclaimed—

"What are you doing on my ground, you fellows?"

"Squire Western by the holy poker!" said O'Rafferty.

"I'll lay six to four on it, and stake the money."

A tall military-looking man, who was indeed Mr. Western, the lord of the manor, and a justice of the peace for the county, stood before them, accompanied by two keepers.

"We—we were merely taking a walk, sir," replied Mr. Mole nervously.

"Nonsense! you are trespassing and poaching. I saw one of you kill a hare; that hare belongs to me. Take it away from him, Jarvis," said the squire.

The keeper, a thick-set, burly fellow, approached O'Rafferty, who threw the hare at him.

"Take it, if you want it. Perhaps a dinner is an object to your master!" he exclaimed.

"No insolence, fellow!" cried Mr. Western, adding—

"Jarvis!"

"Yes, sir," replied the keeper.

"Take their guns from them."

Mr. Mole was about to give up his blunderbuss, when Jack put his hand on his arm.

"I'll be hanged if we do!" he exclaimed. "Stand back, man!"

The keeper hesitated.

"If you are Mr. Western, listen to me," he continued.

"We are gentlemen from Oxford. My friend, Mr. O'Rafferty, and myself are staying with Mrs. Travers, who is a neighbour of yours. The other gentleman is Mr. Mole, an Oxford fellow, who has property near here."

Mr. Western regarded them curiously.

"How am I to know this to be true?" he asked.

"Simply because I am not in the habit of telling lies," replied Jack.

"Who are you?"

"Mr. Harkaway of St. Aldate's."

"Indeed," said Mr. Western. "Pardon my rudeness; but really I have suffered so much from poachers that I am obliged to be strict. Game preserving is expensive as, of course, you are aware; but if I had known who you were, I would have given you a day's shooting with pleasure, and put my keepers at your disposal."

"We did not know we were on your grounds," said Harkaway.

"Don't say another word. I am an old rowing-man

and an Oxford man, Mr. Harkaway, and I feel proud at having met such a distinguished member of my university. Who has not heard of Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldate's, the best oar and bat of his year? Will you and your friends honour me with your company to lunch? Don't say no."

"Me dear boy," said O'Rafferty, "I never say no to a good thing. Let me answer for myself and friends."

The squire smiled, and they walked on, chatting pleasantly together, the keepers being now as respectful as they had formerly been the reverse.

A fine pheasant got up with a low whirr on the skirts of a wood, and was close to Mr. Mole.

"Shoot away, sir; it's a cock," said the squire.

"Ah, yes, I perceive," replied Mr. Mole, bringing his blunderbuss to his shoulder slowly, and taking deliberate aim at the trunk of a tree.

"Fire, man, alive, or you'll be too late!" continued the squire.

Mr. Mole shut his eyes, placed his feet firmly together and with great difficulty pulled the trigger of his antiquated fowling-piece.

There was a loud explosion, and Mole fell on his back, grasping the butt of the blunderbuss, the barrel having gone in minute pieces in various directions.

"Good gracious! the gun has burst!" cried the squire. "Who let him go out with such a thing as that? Why, it must have been as old as his grandfather. Such guns haven't been used since the days of George the Third."

"Is he hurt?" asked Jack, seeing O'Rafferty run to his assistance.

A slight examination showed the Irishman that, though Mr. Mole's face was blackened, and his hands burnt a little, he had escaped without any serious injury.

The keepers who were near him had not been so lucky.

One had received a splinter in the leg, and the other was peppered about the arm with some No. 2 shot.

"He's all right," replied O'Rafferty.

"I am not all right," answered Mr. Mole, springing to his feet. "This is some diabolical plot to ruin me. I know Harkaway of old. Good-bye, gentlemen. I'm off, as I do not choose to risk my precious life in your company."

A gate leading into a small meadow was before him, and he climbed over it.

"Hi, sir! Stop!" said Harkaway. "It wasn't our fault. You shall have my gun."

Mr. Mole waved his hand carelessly, and disappeared behind a hedge.

"Where has he got to?" asked the squire. "By Jove! I think that is the field the bull is in. I say, Jarvis, stop that whimpering. If you have got a charge of shot in you, it won't kill you, will it?"

"No, sir," answered the keeper, making a grimace.

"The gentleman will give you a five-pound note, I daresay, by way of a shinplaster; will he not, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Oh, yes; undoubtedly."

"I never knew a keeper in my life who objected to a peppering if he got his fist full of gold for it," continued Squire Western, adding, "Now then, answer my question. Isn't our bull in that field?"

"Yes, sir; and almighty savage he is too," replied Jarvis.

"Call the gentleman back then, and look slippery, or it will be too late."

The whole party approached the gate leading to the field in which the savage bull was placed.

"Hi, you, sir," shouted Jarvis, "mind the bull. Look out, sir."

The warning came too late.

Already the bull had seen Mole, and Mole had seen the bull.

Lashing his flanks with his tail, and muttering a deep bellowing, the bull at once gave chase.

Away went Mole with the wings of the wind, and away went the bull after him.

Fortunately for Mole, the bull was quite at the extremity of the small paddock when he sighted the intruder, who had not far to run to reach the hedge.

Here again he was at fault.

It was a thick, tall and quickset hedge without the ghost of a gap in it.

How to get over was the question.

In vain Mole tried to climb up it.

He only scratched himself in the hopeless attempt.

Then he charged it with his back, and tried to butt his way through it with his hat.

It was utterly useless, however, to persevere.

While he was deliberating and trembling in every limb, bathed in a cold perspiration, and even shedding tears of terror, the sound of the bull's hoofs behind him, and a deep bellow, riveted him to the spot, frozen with horror.

"Harkaway has done this for me," he said to himself, with ashy lips, from which issued a faint moan.

The bull saved him the trouble of any further reflection, for, putting down his head, he very quickly lifted Mole on the top of his horns, and tossed him as easily over the hedge as if he had been a baby.

This was witnessed from the other side of the field.

O'Rafferty burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's what I call a joke," he said. "That man Mole is a gift. I can see there is lots of fun to be got out of him. Is he always like that?"

"Always," replied Jack. "Old Mole's a great lark, I can tell you."

"Don't talk, gentlemen, if you please. Skirt this field so as to avoid the bull, and let us go to your unfortunate friend. He may be seriously injured, and that, you will admit, would be no joke," exclaimed the squire.

Nothing more was said.

All hastened to the spot where Mole had disappeared, and a quick run of a few minutes brought them to a labourer's cottage, at the back of which was the hedge over which the bull had tossed him.

"There he is. Look, look!" cried Jack. "What on earth is the man doing?"

Mole was throwing his arms about wildly, hitting himself on his head and face, and stamping his feet vigorously.

"He's mad. Perhaps when the bull hyked him, he fell on his head," said the squire.

"No, me boy," said O'Rafferty, whose quick eye had detected the cause of his confusion. "Don't you see the bee-hives?"

"The what?"

"Under the hedge there. Mole has tumbled into an apiary, belonging to this cottager, and the bees are resenting the intrusion."

"So they are, by George," replied Jack. "They'll kill him. Bees are ugly customers to tackle."

Suddenly Mole, stung to madness, went off at a run, but he had not gone far before he disappeared.

He seemed to have sunk into the bowels of the earth.

Nothing could have been stranger than his mysterious vanishing.

"Where has he gone to now?" asked Jack.

O'Rafferty was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Oh, carry me out," he said, holding his sides. "Take me home, some of you, or he'll be the death of me. He makes me laugh too much."

"What has he done now?" inquired Jack.

"Can't you see? He's tumbled down the well; there is the windlass standing close by. A hundred to one it's a well," replied O'Rafferty.

"Really," remarked the squire, "you are a most heartless young man; your friend's misfortunes only provoke your mirth. Perhaps he's dead this time."

"Not he, my good sir," answered the Irishman. "That man has as many lives as a cat. Don't be in a hurry to get him out; the water will cool him."

"Nonsense, we must not be brutal," said the squire, impatiently.

He was about to advance to the well, when O'Rafferty laid his hand on his arm.

"Wait," he cried. "Look, there is the cottager's wife coming for some water. Now you'll see a lark, or I'm a Dutchman."

The little party halted again, and, concealed by a thin fringe of shrubs, watched the proceedings of the woman, who, as she held a jug in her hand, had evidently come for some water, as O'Rafferty had rightly guessed.

When Mole slipped into the well, he had caught hold of the bucket, which went down with him till he reached the bottom.

Getting into the bucket, he stood upright, holding on to the chain with his hands.

The woman thought the bucket very heavy, but she steadily wound the chain round the windlass.

To her surprise and horror, a man's face wild, and haggard, appeared on a level with the brickwork of the well.

Fancying it was a ghost or an evil spirit, she uttered a piercing shriek, let go of the handle, and ran howling into the house.

Down went Mole a second time, cursing the woman's stupidity, and wondering if anyone else would come to his aid.

"It is always my luck when I go out with Harkaway," he said to himself; "I really must cut that young gentleman's acquaintance. As a pupil he is very well, but as a friend dangerous in the extreme."

Seeing that the woman had left Mole to his fate, the squire walked to the well, and with the keepers' assistance raised the bucket.

Mole stepped out more dead than alive.

He was sore from the explosion of the blunderbuss, he ached from the toss the bull had given him, he smarted from the bees' stings, and he was wet through and chilled to the bone.

"Take me home to die," he moaned.

"Put him to bed in the woman's cottage," said the squire. "I will send him all he requires from my house."

This was accordingly done.

Mr. Mole went to bed, and had some ointment rubbed over his stings. When he woke up an excellent dinner had been sent from the Hall, and the next morning he was, though stiff, able to crawl home.

Here no news of Ambonia awaited him.

What had become of her, was simply a matter of conjecture.

"No news, good news!" thought Mole.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE LIGHT IN THE SAND-PIT.

SQUIRE WESTERN laughed heartily over Mr. Mole's misadventures, when he found that he was not seriously hurt.

He gave the two Oxford men an excellent lunch, and they were sorry when it was time to retrace their steps to Mrs. Travers's residence.

But they could not stay, as their hostess dined at six, and they had several miles to walk.

Wishing the squire good-day, and heartily thanking him for his kindness, they started on their homeward journey, both a little flushed and excited with the wine they had drunk at Mr. Mole's house and at the Hall.

After walking about a mile, they lost the road, which was extremely disagreeable, as they did not know the country at all.

It was rapidly growing dark.

"I don't like this," remarked Jack.

"Nor I," remarked O'Rafferty.

He stumbled in a puddle as he spoke, splashing the muddy water all around.

"Hold up," said Jack.

"I'll be hanged if I can," answered O'Rafferty. "I drank too much of that champagne at Mr. Western's, and, like a donkey, mixed it with brandy."

"Never mix your liquors."

"I don't as a rule—hic—but it's no use denying it, I'm half-slew'd, and the further I walk, the worse I get."

This confession took Jack by surprise.

He found himself lost on a dark winter night, with a companion who was tipsy.

What was he to do?

"If we could only find a cottage, with a good fire, I shouldn't care," he said, perplexed.

"Ah!" exclaimed O'Rafferty. "Cottages are fine things. That's—hic—why I like Ireland. It's all cottages."

"And pigs," suggested Jack.

O'Rafferty stopped and looked at him with drunken gravity through the growing darkness.

"Is it insulting me country—hic—that ye are?"

"Not for a moment. I like roast pork and plenty of potatoes," answered Jack.

"Sure, if ye was to say one wor-rd against me country," continued O'Rafferty, staggering, "I'd have the heart out of ye, Harkaway. I'm an Oirishman, bred and bor-rn, me boy, and I'm proud of it. With me sprig of shillayley and shamrock so green, och; it's an iligant thing to be an Oirishman, and a broth of a bhoy into the bargain."

"Doesn't your brogue come out when you're tight," said Jack.

"Small blame to me, if I don't speak like the Saxon."

"Don't stand there, jawing. Come along, do," cried Jack, impatiently.

"Ye're as bad as a wife, with your orders, and 'come along, do's,'" replied O'Rafferty. "Shall I sing you a song?"

"Before I was married, I did as I liked,
And went wherever I chose,
But now I am wedded, I'm nothing at all;
It's my wife is the cause of me woes."

Never get married, Jack—hic—marriage is a mistake, me bhoys."

"Are you going to stay here all night?"

"Not knowing, can't say—hic."

"Take my arm. I'm shivering with this damp searching cold," said Jack.

"I'm as warm as a toast. Sit down and have a song. I have been screwed before this," remarked O'Rafferty.

"Being screwed is nothing when you're used to it."

Jack fancied he saw a man approaching him.

Nor was he mistaken.

A tall slouching fellow, came close to them. He was dressed in a rough, careless fashion, looking like a cross between a day-labourer and a gipsy.

"I say, master," cried Jack, "can you tell us which is the Oxford road?"

"Yes, I can, but I shan't," was the surly reply.

"I'll give you five shillings if you will put us in the way."

"Chuck us a couple of dollars, and that will be five bob apiece then," said the man.

"Here's half a sovereign," answered Jack.

The man took it, and put it in his pocket, and whistling to himself walked off.

"Here, I say—hi!" cried Jack.

"What do you want?" cried the man, stopping.

"You're to show us the way."

"I didn't say so. Good-night," replied the man, and with a derisive laugh, he vaulted over a stile and disappeared.

"Done, by Jove!" cried Jack, flushing angrily.

"Done by a clever scoundrel, I should say," replied O'Rafferty. "This ought to be a lesson to, you, me boy."

Never part with the ready until a service has—hic—been hic—actually rendered.”

“You’re right; there are only two bad paymasters, those who pay beforehand and those who don’t pay at all,” replied Jack, bitterly.

“If that fellow had only stopped—hic—I’d have shown him a neat imitation of Donnybrook Fair, with me sprig of shillayley and shamrock so green.”

CHAPTER LXV.

THE BLACK BAND.

“PULL yourself together,” said Jack to O’Rafferty. “It will never do to stop here all night. Take my arm.”

With some difficulty he drew his unsteady companion along.

Once or twice the Irishman let his gun fall, and Jack had to carry the two under his disengaged arm.

The moon, which was in its first quarter, now struggled through the ragged drifting clouds which continually obscured its disc.

Suddenly Jack stopped, and threw his friend violently backwards.

“Ease her, back her, stop her,” said O’Rafferty. “But I say, me jewel, if you must stop the ship, do it more gently—hic—next time. You’ve spoilt a new pair of ‘sit-in-ems’ in the mud. I wish—hic—ye’d keep sober, Harkaway, when I take ye out for a day’s enjoyment.”

“Don’t you see we are on the edge of a pit?” replied Jack.

“Is it a bottomless pit—hic?”

“I can’t tell what it is at present, though it looks to me like an old disused sand-pit. It’s lucky the moon came out, or we should have been gone coons.”

He peered down into the depths of the pit.

All at once he laid his hand on his companion’s arm, saying—

“Hush!”

“Hush-a-bye, baby on the-tree top!” sang O’Rafferty.

"Deuce take it, man!" cried Jack, losing his temper.
"Will you be quiet?"

"What is it then?"

"I see a light in the pit."

"Jack-o'-lantern perhaps."

"It is a lantern. Probably it belongs to gipsies or thieves."

"Anyone is better than no one at a time—hic—like this," said O'Rafferty. "I'll go and join them; perhaps they've got a drop of the crater and a bit of bacca. Come along."

Before he could prevent him, O'Rafferty stepped forward, and losing his footing on the top of the pit, vanished.

"Good Heavens!" cried Jack, "the foolish fellow will be killed. He has fallen into the pit."

It was true.

O'Rafferty had disappeared in the gloomy abyss.

Feeling embarrassed with the guns which he carried, Harkaway laid them down under a bush.

For this he was sorry afterwards.

The accident that had happened to O'Rafferty alarmed him.

He had begun to like his volatile friend, who was certainly amusing if nothing else.

The Irishman's fondness for practical joking was not at all times to be approved of, but it was born in him.

Thinking only of O'Rafferty, Jack looked at the side of the pit, and after a slight examination, found that the bank was shelving and not upright or perpendicular.

This was a reassuring fact.

On the rough edge of the bank grew some wild stunted shrubs and trees, by the aid of which Jack groped his way down.

The depth was not great.

Perhaps not more than five and twenty or thirty feet, and in a short time Jack had gained the bottom.

He looked around him.

The lantern had disappeared, and there was not a gleam of light to be seen, except the silvery radiance which was afforded by the infant moon.

Disused for some years, the sand-pit in some places was filled with water, which at the further extremity—that being the lowest part, was some yards in depth.

O'Rafferty had rolled down the shallowest part ; though, had he been on the other side, he would have tumbled over a precipitous cliff into a deep lake.

A groan startled Jack.

"O'Rafferty," he cried, "are you near me?"

"I believe you, me boy," was the ready answer. "I've got a beautiful bed of sandstone, and will thank ye to lave me alone, for it's just forty winks I'm going to have, and sleep off the champagne—hic. If it hadn't been gooseberry, it wouldn't have had any effect on—hic—Dennis O'Rafferty."

"You are not hurt?"

"Devil a bit—hic!"

"No bones broken?" continued Jack.

"Not a rib. It was as easy going down as shelling peas, or rolling along that hill in Greenwich Park on Good Friday with a pretty girl by your side screaming with—hic—ginger-beer and joy. Good-night; make yourself happy, and believe me to be, yours truly, Dennis O'Rafferty—hic?"

A loud snore, which Jack had before taken for a groan, followed this speech.

Feeling convinced that the Irishman could not come to any harm where he was for a short time, Jack gave up the idea of trying to wake him.

"Let him sleep off the wine," he muttered. "He can't hurt."

Remembering that he had seen a lantern moving about in the pit, he fancied that some tramp had found out a corner in which he was in the habit of sleeping when passing that way, or a band of gipsies might have a resting-place there.

Picking his way very carefully to avoid falling into holes and tumbling into the water, Jack wandered about the pit.

It was very difficult to move about in the darkness.

A length Jack knocked his elbow against a projecting ledge in the side of the sand-pit.

"Hold hard," he said to himself.

Turning his head a little on one side, so as to see what was beyond the hedge he held his breath.

He heard voices.

He saw a light

True, it was only a faint glimmer, but still it was not a Jack-o'-lantern or Will-o'-the-wisp.

Sinking on his hands and knees, he crawled very gently along the damp sand for about half a dozen yards, when he perceived two men, who were talking together.

The light proceeded from a narrow fissure in the side of the cliff, protected by a small tree which grew close to it.

He could not doubt that this was the entrance to a cave.

Perhaps the cave was of natural growth, or it might have been cut out of the soft stone by human hands.

There was scarcely any moonshine, and the stars were few and far between, so that it was with difficulty Jack could perceive anything.

However he lay perfectly still and listened.

"It isn't time yet," said one of the men. "It can't be more than seven o'clock, and I never cracked a crib in my life before twelve."

"Who wants to hurry?" replied the other.

"Not I. Come inside, and I'll give you a game of crib for a hour or two."

"I've got no money."

"I'll trust you. We shall get plenty of swag to-night at Squire Western's. They say his plate is worth thousands."

This remark enlightened Jack.

He had come across, accidentally, a band of men who were going to commit a burglary at the house of the hospitable squire who had entertained him and his friend but a short time before.

Though his intention was a dangerous one, he could not resist the temptation of ventriloquising a little.

Throwing his voice out into the middle of the sand-pit, he exclaimed in a rough tone—

"You must be a couple of flats."

The men started.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "You are going to rob Squire Western, thinking his plate is gold and silver, when it's all duffing electro. Ha, ha!"

"Did you hear that, Ben Shardler?" said one of the men, nervously.

"Yes, I did, Dick Menzey," answered the other, equally alarmed.

This gave Jack a knowledge of their names, for though they spoke gently, he heard them distinctly, being close to them, while they thought him a long way off.

"It's time you were copped, Ben Shardler," he cried. "The police have been after you long enough."

"He knows my name," said Shardler.

"It's a detective," replied Menzey.

"Speak different," continued Shardler.

"What do you mean. Ackber angler?" said Menzey.

"Esyer," exclaimed Shardler.

Luckily Jack understood what they intended to do, for he had heard a dog-fancier in Oxford, who knew every thing and everybody, explain one day what the language of betting men and thieves was.

Men of that description have invented a language very difficult to interpret, but which is easily intelligible to those who are instructed in it.

The mode of speaking is simple enough.

The language is called back slang.

To speak it, you must take off the first letter from each word.

This is put at the end.

Then you add "er."

Sometimes "k" is added before or after a vowel as in the case of "if," or "I," which would make "ifker" or "iker."

So that "ackber angler," is simply "back slang," and "esyer," is "yes."

With this explanation our reader will be able to follow the conversation of the two thieves.

"I mean to have you to-night, all the lot of you," exclaimed Jack.

"Oder ouyer earher atther?" said Shardler; "eher eansmer oter opker oter ightner."

"Otner ifker Iker nowker itker," answered Menzey.

"Who's in the cave?" asked Jack. "You'd best tell the truth."

The two men held a consultation.

Shardler said—

"Right you are. I'll settle him. Where is he?"

"Not far off," answered Menzey. "Dead men tell no tales."

"True for you, my boy," responded Shardler.

As he spoke he ran forward in the darkness, and was presently heard plunging in some water.

"Here I am. Come on," said Jack, as if he was straight in front of him.

"Help, I'm drowning," cried Shardler.

"More fool you," replied Menzey. "If you have got into the water, you must get out of it."

In a short time Shardler emerged wet and shivering.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack.

"He's there," cried Shardler. "I only wish I could swim, I'd have him."

"On'tder alker oser oudler," cried Menzey, cautiously.

"Ouyer aveker aker ryter," said Shardler.

Menzey thought he would have a try, but he took a roundabout route and unluckily fell over Jack.

Turning round he seized him in a grasp of iron.

"Omeker oter ymer elpher," he cried.

Shardler was by his side in a moment.

Between them they overpowered Jack.

"So we have got you at last, my man," said Shardler.

"You will have to come inside, and if ever you come out of that cave alive, you'll have luck on your side."

It was in vain for Jack to make any further resistance, for the two men were more than a match for him.

They held him tightly, and dragged him through a small opening into the cave.

The passage was long and narrow.

At length it opened into a series of sandstone caverns, in one of which he saw half a dozen men assembled.

They were smoking and drinking; some were playing cards, others talking over a great fire, the smoke of which rolled in heavy volumes to the ceiling, and disappeared through an aperture in the sandstone.

Their seats were rudely-made benches of wood, and there were two tables of unpolished deal, on which stood bottles and a jar of tobacco.

The men were ill-looking gipsies.

As Shardler and Menzey entered with their captive, they all looked up inquiringly.

"At'swher ether ameger?" asked one.

"Ewer aveker otger aker isonerprer," replied Menzey.

"Allker ether aptainker," said Shardler.

One of the men went to a bed of moss and straw in a corner, and roused a man.

By the dim light of an oil lamp, which hung from the ceiling Jack perceived features which were well known to him.

"Hunston!" he involuntarily exclaimed.

The captain of the thieves was his old enemy.

Hunston was in command of the band in whose power he unhappily found himself.

"Harkaway!" replied Hunston, who was equally astonished.

Jack glanced defiantly at him.

He could now guess where Hunston had been hiding, while the Oxford police had been looking everywhere but in the right place for him.

"Isker eher loneaker!" said Hunston.

"Esyer, aptainker," replied Menzey.

"Erewher idder ouyer indfer imker?"

"Outker ideser ether aveker."

"Indber isker armsker," said Hunston.

In a moment a thick cord was fastened round Jack's arms, and he was rendered powerless.

"What do you mean to do with me?" asked Jack.

"Kill you," replied Hunston, with a savage glance.

"You have fallen into the hands of the Black Band, and they never spare their enemies."

"You can not mean what you say," answered Jack.

"Harkaway," said Hunston, "you have been my ruin through life. I should not now be in the position I am, were it not for you, and do you think I ever forget or forgive?"

"You might at least be merciful to a man who has never intentionally done you any harm."

"Bah!" replied Hunston, "when I see you, Harkaway, I become a wild beast; I long for blood."

"I always thought you were a brute and a savage," replied Jack coolly.

Hunston waved his one arm, and said—

"You have been the cause of all my misfortunes, and by Heaven, I will have my revenge at last. If you had

not the luck of Old Nick, I should have settled accounts with you before now."

"While there is life there is hope," answered Jack, affecting a gaiety he did not feel.

"Take him into the outer cave and let him lie there. Tie his legs, and shoot him if he moves," replied Hunston.

Shardler and Menzey carried Jack between them into a dark and gloomy cavern, fastened his legs with a stout cord, and there left him.

"This is a pleasant lookout," said Jack to himself. "It's Pisang over again. I wonder if I'm doomed to creak this time?"

He was indeed in a desperate situation.

It was no joke to be in the power of such a villain as Hunston.

CHAPTER LXVI.

IN THE THIEVES' CAVE.

A SLIGHT reflection showed Jack that there was little chance of his escaping from the Black Band, of which Hunston was the captain.

If any of his members wished to show him mercy, they could not do so.

He was in possession of their secret.

The Oxford police would offer a large reward for information leading to the capture of a band of robbers who had already made themselves well known.

Many country houses had been broken into round about, and valuables to a large amount carried off.

Owing to such of the thieves as had been seen by the terrified inmates, wearing a dark-coloured mask, they had acquired the name of the Black Band.

Hunston was just the desperate sort of villain to command such scoundrels.

He had enlisted in his service a gipsy, a fraudulent clerk, an escaped convict, three discharged prisoners, and an Italian communist, whose dagger was ever ready to spill blood.

With these men, he had taken up his abode in the secret caverns of the old sandstone, which formed the walls of the disused pit.

He had accidentally discovered their existence, when the attempt to murder Jack in the Iffley Road rendered it advisable to leave the city and hide in the country.

The life they led was a rough uncomfortable one, for the only bed they could obtain was a truss of straw and a handful or so of leaves.

But the robbers did not intend to continue for ever in the same line of business.

It was arranged between them that when they had collected a certain sum of money, it should be divided between them.

Then they should separate and each go his own way, the secret of the Black Band being locked up in their breasts.

After Jack was removed, they talked earnestly together for some time.

About ten o'clock, four men, armed with all the tools required by burglars, left the cave, and took the direction of Squire Western's house, which they had resolved to rob that night.

Jack heard them go, and guessing their errand, longed for liberty, if only to put the squire on his guard.

The damp cold of the cave in which he was lying, penetrated his bones, and this, added to the excitement of his mind, prevented him from sleeping.

Besides this he suffered from a raging thirst.

Closing his eyes, he tried to forget his troubles.

He fell into a sort of dog sleep at last, from which he was roused by the sound of voices.

The robbers had evidently returned from their expedition.

"Where is Red-Handed Dick?" he heard Hunston inquire.

"Shot through the heart, captain," replied the man called Menzey.

"You are sure he is dead?"

"I fired my own pistol through his head, to make sure of him," replied the ruffian, with a grim smile.

"That is right. We make it a rule to leave no wounded behind, so that only a corpse should fall into the hands of

the police ; and corpses tell nothing. What plunder have you brought off ?”

“Only a ladies’ jewel-case ; the plate was too heavy, and there was a strong resistance. All the household turned out with guns, when the infernal dogs barked and blew the gaff upon us,” replied Menzey.

“Yes,” remarked Shardler ; “if any of them had been cool enough to shoot, we shouldn’t be here now.”

“Poor Dick,” said Hunston. “He was the prince of villains. I could have wished him a better end. Fall to, my lads ; your supper is on the table, and you have earned it.”

“Won’t you join us, captain ?”

“Not now ; I am going to speak to the prisoner,” replied Hunston.

A cold ham and half a dozen fowls, well roasted and stuffed with sausages, flanked with good wheaten bread and a flagon of ale, drawn from a cask which stood in a corner, invited the attention of the Black Band.

This good fare was the result of the robbery of a farmhouse the night before.

Taking up a lamp, Hunston sought Jack.

Setting the lamp down upon a ledge, so as to throw the light full upon Harkaway’s face, while his own remained in the shadow, he stood with his arms folded and looked down upon his prostrate enemy.

A smile of cold-blooded triumph such as Jack had often seen before on the same lips, stole over Hunston’s face.

The face was altered though, strangely altered of late.

Young though he was, evil passions had set their marks and lines upon its rugged exterior, and a life of dissipation and unbridled excess, had stamped him as a slave of vice.

If the face is, as Lavater says, an index or reflex of the mind, then Hunston bore his character as plainly branded on him as was Cain’s.

“Fate seems to be against you, Harkaway,” he said.

“Why ?” asked Jack, drily.

“Because you are thrown into my hands in a most unexpected manner. This is a pleasure I did not dream of.”

“Pleasure to see me ?” repeated Jack.

“Of course it is, under the circumstances. You are in my power once more. I was only waiting for this oppor-

tunity. It has come sooner than I expected, though I knew it must arrive at an early date."

"How so?"

"Through Kemp. He meant to accuse you of the robbery of the bank, and when you were convicted of the charge by the porter's evidence and sent to prison, all would be over. Kemp would have avenged poor Davis's death, and I should have wiped off old scores. But," added Hunston, reflectively, "it is better thus. You shall die out of the way, and no one shall know what has become of you."

Jack was silent, though his eyes burned with an unnatural lustre, and his parched lips quivered.

"I forgot one thing," continued Hunston. "Emily shall know that you are dead, so that she may grieve for you."

"Emily will never be yours," said Jack, goaded to desperation.

"That is more than you can tell."

"We love one another too well," answered Jack, "for one ever to forget the other. She may pine away and die."

"Or go mad," suggested Hunston, who seemed to wish to heap every conceivable torture upon the head of his enemy.

"That is not impossible; but she will never forget me."

"My good fellow," said Hunston, carelessly lighting a cigar, which was one of the best money could buy in Oxford, "you are a mere child. What is love?"

"The purest passion which can animate the human heart."

"Not at all. Do you believe a woman when she says she loves you?" asked Hunston.

"I believe Emily," continued Jack.

"For my part, if a woman says she loves me, I fancy she has not dined the day before," said Hunston, with a coarse laugh. "Love is sentimental nonsense; it is an art, a science if you like, and women are its professors."

"You may sneer as long as you like," said Jack. "It is fellows like you that laugh at every thing good and holy."

"Say your prayers if you want to talk," replied Hun-

ston, impatiently. "But don't argue with me, or I shall have to kick you on the head to keep you quiet."

"You are coward enough for that," retorted Jack, boldly.

"Coward! Why am I a coward?"

"Ask yourself. Were you not a coward to try and stab me in the Iffley Road. Was it brave to kill the poor Jew! Was it honest to rob the bank?"

"Who can prove that I did any of these things?"

"I am sure of it."

"You?" cried Hunston, contemptuously. "Your word is not worth a button. I would not give a brass farthing for your oath. Say your prayers, I tell you."

"I have said them," answered Jack, mildly.

"When?"

"While I was lying here, and I am not ashamed to own it."

"Do you think they are answered?"

"Not yet, or I should be out of your power. But I can wait," said Jack.

"Wait!" repeated Hunston, with a blasphemous oath.

"Well, yes, you may have to wait. Heaven is a long way off, you see, and you can't always expect an answer by return of post."

Jack shuddered.

Hunston's impiety was awful, and his recklessness shocked him immensely.

"There is not much difficulty in telling where you will go," he said.

"Where is that?" asked Hunston.

"To the devil's kingdom," replied Jack.

"Perhaps," said Hunston carelessly. "I have been told before that I am going there by an express train; but it doesn't matter, I've got a return ticket."

"When you are in the midst of flames and——" began Jack.

"Stop preaching, you fool!" almost screamed Hunston, as if he realized the picture Jack was trying to raise before his eyes. "Listen to me. I'm not ass enough to go in for canting humbug if you are. Talk of yourself and leave me alone. I've got a jolly sight longer to live than you."

"I'm not dead yet," said Jack.

"Do you know how long you've got to live?" said Hunston, with a searching glance.

"An hour?" asked Jack, affecting a smile, which was far from being genuine.

"Longer than that. How long do you think you could live without food or water?"

"Perhaps eight-and-forty hours."

"Men have been known to live nine days, enduring horrible sufferings, for the want of any thing to eat or drink," exclaimed Hunston.

"I doubt it," said Jack.

"You will have an opportunity of judging in your own person before long," continued Hunston.

"I?"

"Yes; you, my boy. I could kill you outright, but I want you to die a lingering and horrible death, because I hate you so."

After looking at his prisoner a minute, Hunston continued—

"Look at my armless shoulder. Who shot off my arm?"

"It was done in self-defence."

"Look at what you have made me."

"You cannot blame me. I have offered to start you in life," said Jack; "but you prefer a vagabond existence."

"Do I? Take that for your insolence," cried Hunston.

He brutally kicked Jack in the mouth as he lay bound on the floor, and covered his face with blood.

"Coward?" exclaimed Jack, all his old spirit rising within him. "I defy you. Kill me by inches, if you like—cut me to pieces—I will show you how a brave man can die and shame a coward."

"We shall see," answered Hunston.

Turning to the cavity which answered the purpose of a doorway from one room to the other, he exclaimed—

"Enzeymer!"

Menzey, half drunk as he was, responded to his call.

"Idder ouyer allker, aptainker?" he said.

"Esyer."

"Atwher oder ouyer antwer?"

"Etger ricksber andker ortarmer oter utsher ether rison-erper inker isther aultver orfer everer."

Menzey started in amazement at this order.

"Etler itker eber onder atker onceker. On'tder oseler aker omentmer," continued Hunston.

Menzey bowed in token of obedience and went away.

"I shall see you once more, and then we part for ever," exclaimed Hunston.

Jack made no answer.

Hunston took up the lamp, and joined his men in the other cave, leaving Jack alone in the dark.

No wonder that Jack's soul sank within him.

He had only too well understood the command Hunston had given to his lieutenant Menzey.

This is what he had said—

"Get brick and mortar to shut the prisoner in this vault for ever."

And then he added—

"Let it be done at once. Don't lose a moment."

Now Jack knew what he meant by a lingering death by starvation.

Hunston intended to brick up the entrance to the inner cavern in the sandstone.

This would make Harkaway a close prisoner, without any hope of escape, and he would die in the cruellest manner that the mind of man could conceive.

Shutting his eyes, he tried to fancy it was all a hideous dream.

Only a short time before he had been enjoying himself with O'Rafferty at Squire Western's.

If he had been in the Malay Archipelago, he would have expected some atrocious treatment, but in England, not many miles from Oxford, the thing was incredible.

Difficult to believe as it was, Jack did not shirk the truth.

It seemed that if any assistance came to him, it must be something more than human.

CHAPTER LXVII.

O'RAFFERTY WAKES UP.

It was quite late when O'Rafferty woke up, wondering very much where he was. His head ached, and so did his limbs, from the cold, which was severe and penetrating.

A few moments' reflection brought all that had happened back to his mind, and he recollected how he had drunk too much champagne, lost his way with Jack, and, to wind matters up, fallen down the side of the sand-pit.

"If there was a way in, there must be a way out," he said to himself.

By the aid of the moon, he climbed the side, and stood on level ground again.

Thinking Jack had given him up, and gone on his way without him, he resolved to try and find the road.

This he was fortunate enough to do, and an hour's walking brought him to a village containing a second-rate inn, the door of which was open.

"Here's luck," he cried. "I shall go no further to-night."

Entering the hotel, he was greatly surprised to find that he had been there before, during some occasion when he had driven from Oxford into the country.

The Stag Inn, as it was called, was celebrated among university men for being reached by a pleasant drive through a pretty country; in addition to which the traveller could, as a rule make sure of a famous pigeon-pie, a tender steak, and a juicy chop, with mashed potatoes, all done to a turn, and washed down with some of Salt's best Oxford ale.

Mrs. O'Leary, a widow, kept the inn, and was a chatty little body, not much on the wrong side of forty, and an Irishwoman, as her name signified.

O'Rafferty, as usual, had played her a few tricks, and she remembered him well as the young gentleman who was "up to his fun and divilment," as she expressed it.

"Ah, me dear Mrs. O'Leary!" he cried, as he entered the little bar parlour in which she was sitting, "it's me-self that's a lucky boy this night."

"And what will yez be wanting at this time of night in a respectable house, Misther O'Rafferty?" replied the widow.

"Shure and it's the bite and the sup which ye won't refuse to a poor belated counthryman; that wouldn't be throe to your swate nature, aroon."

"As for the pigeon-pie and the beer, you're as welcome as the flowers in May," answered the landlady.

"It's all I want, save a kiss from those lips, which are more ravishing in their rich tints than those of Vanus herself," said O'Rafferty, gallantly.

"Go along wid your nonsense! Will yer sup in the bar?"

"And where else would I sup? Is it lave your society you'd wish me to? It's hurtful to my falings, Mrs. O'Leary, to think of such a thing. Order in the dove tart, and I'll show you where an Irishman's appetite lies."

"It's the ould ale your honour drinks?"

"It's that same, Mrs. O'Leary."

The widow called a servant, who quickly laid the cloth, upon which she placed a jug of foaming beer and a cold pigeon-pie, which was not all steak and crust, but fairly represented the pigeon interest, and was daintily sprinkled with hard-boiled eggs.

"This is mate for a king. Good luck to you, Mrs. O'Leary, and may you be fortunate with your next," said O'Rafferty.

"My next! What does yer honour mane?" asked the widow, affecting ignorance of his drift.

"Ah! go along wid your innocence," he continued.

"It's your next sweetheart I'm alluding to, and the man isn't born who's good enough for you. Faix, but this is a jewel of a pie. More power to your elbow, ma'am?"

So he continued chatting, much to the widow's delight, who liked his compliments, and was pleased at the same time to see a countryman, for she was dearly fond of her beloved Ireland, where she had been born and bred, not coming to England till she was past twenty years of age.

When he had finished his repast he threw himself back

in his chair, lighted a cigar, saying "By your lave, acushla," and stretched his legs out to the fender.

The fire was burning brightly.

The room looked cheerful, and he felt perfectly contented.

"This is what I call taking mine ease at mine inn," he cried. "It wants but a little potheen, me dear. Don't put too much sugar in it, and don't forget the lemon-peel."

"Ye'll have to make haste, Mr. O'Rafferty," replied the widow. "It's gone eleven by the church clock, and it's time for all dacent people to be in bed."

Mrs. O'Leary would listen to none of his excuses, so he had to retire.

O'Rafferty slept well, and in the morning found that a dog-cart was waiting to convey him to Oxford.

Lighting his pipe, he jumped in and told the driver to go first to Mrs. Travers's, as he wished to see Jack, and thought they might return to college together.

An hour's quick driving brought him to Mrs. Travers's house, where, to his surprise, Harkaway had not been.

Both Mrs. Travers and Emily were much concerned, but supposed that Jack had got into the Oxford road and was at St. Aldate's.

"No doubt," said Emily, "you will find him in his rooms."

"I think so," said O'Rafferty; "though it wasn't friendly to leave me as he did."

"You have told me the story," answered Emily, with a smile, "and I do not think you deserve much consideration at his hands."

"Don't be too hard upon me," said O'Rafferty; "it is not often I get half-seas over."

"I have only your word for that."

"I'll promise to be a good boy in future."

"That will never happen, Dennis," exclaimed Mrs. Travers. "I have a shrewd suspicion that you were the person who spoilt my party by playing all those tricks."

"Too much the gentleman," replied O'Rafferty, with a low bow.

"Never mind; I am of a long-suffering and forgiving disposition, and if you will go to Oxford, and kindly send over a messenger to relieve my dear Emily's anxiety about Harkaway, I will not scold you."

"I'm off like a shot," said O'Rafferty.

Jumping into the dog-cart, he took the reins and dashed off at a splendid pace towards Oxford.

"It's yerself, Mr. O'Rafferty, who can tool the tits. I never seed such driving out of ould Ireland, where we can go over stone-walls as clane as a whistle," said the coachman.

O'Rafferty looked at him severely.

"Are you an Irishman?" he asked.

"To the backbone. I'm that same, your honour."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you rapscallion, for not staying in your own counthry. Wasn't the Emerald Isle good enough for ye? Hould your tongue, and don't spake another word unless you want me to upset the trap over the first hedge and break your neck."

"Perhaps Ireland's none the worse for your own absence, Mr. O'Rafferty," said the man, with a grin.

"Bedad, you're right," replied O'Rafferty; "you've got the ready answer. I can see you're a rale counthryman, and it's a drop of Irish whisky you shall have at the next pub. What's your name?"

"Pathrick O'Rouke, yer honour."

"Well, Pathrick, we'll drink prosperity to ould Ireland. If the Saxons have taken our land, they've left us our wit."

"Thrue for you, your honour, and bekase why?—it was the only thing the English couldn't steal, seeing it was born in us."

O'Rafferty laughed, whipped up his horse, and in a short time reached Oxford, where he discharged the coachman, and hurriedly made his way to his rooms in Magdalen.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE CHIEF OF THE OXFORD POLICE.

HAVING put on his academical costume, O'Rafferty proceeded to Harkaway's rooms.

On the staircase he met Sir Sydney Dawson, who, forgiving the joke the Irishman had played him, asked—

"What have you done with Harkaway?"

"I! What do you mean? Is he not at home?" answered O'Rafferty.

"No. I hear that you and he went to a ball together two days ago, and he has not been seen or heard of since."

"I saw him last in a gravel-pit," said O'Rafferty. "This is serious."

In a few words he related the adventure, which had befallen them, and Sir Sydney exclaimed—

"Perhaps he has been robbed and murdered. I know he has enemies."

"Who are they?"

"One fellow is called Kemp; you know him. The other is an old school-fellow named Hunston, who has turned out very badly. Harvey could tell you more about it than I, but unfortunately he is laid up."

"Oh, yes. Harvey is at the Jew's house! I heard of that. What would you do if you were in my place?"

"I should go to the police. Perhaps Hunston has met Harkaway. It is time this man Hunston was tackled by the authorities; there are grave suspicions about him."

While they were talking on the staircase Kemp came up.

He had bought a wig and looked like himself again, and though guessing that he had been the victim of a trick at the hands of O'Rafferty, it did not appear to suit him to take any notice of it.

"How do?" he exclaimed. "Seen any thing of Harkaway?"

"No," replied O'Rafferty. "Perhaps you know more about him than I do. He is missing."

"Where did you leave him?" asked Kemp.

"In a pit where they had been digging sand or gravel or something."

Kemp started.

A visible pallor spread itself all over his face.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, recovering himself. "He will turn up all right. He has lost his way, that is all. I shouldn't bother about him."

"On the contrary, I shall bother," said O'Rafferty.

"In what way?"

"That's me own business, me boy."

"Do you mean to go to the police! I wouldn't if I

were you. What can they do? Wait a day or two," said Kemp, in a persuasive voice.

"I think Mr. Kemp is quite right; don't do any thing for a day or two," exclaimed Sir Sydney.

At the same time the baronet pressed the Irishman's elbow in a significant manner.

"Very well," replied O'Rafferty, taking the hint. "We will let the matter rest. What do you say to a stroll?"

"Which has for its object?"

"Beer," said O'Rafferty, laughing.

"'Life is not all beer and skittles,' as some one observed; but that is no reason why we shouldn't imbibe malt liquor on an occasion. Good-morning, Mr. Kemp."

Sir Sydney and O'Rafferty walked away, and as soon as they were out of earshot of Kemp the former said—

"Let us go straight to the police-station. I am convinced there is some thing wrong."

"Why?"

"Did you not see Kemp turn pale when you mentioned the sand-pit?"

"Yes."

"And it could not have escaped you that he was extremely anxious that we should not say any thing to the police about Harkaway's mysterious disappearance."

"Be jabbers, you're right," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "It's as plain as the cave of Fingall."

They walked at once to the police-station, where they found Mr. Manisty, the chief of Oxford police.

He was a very intelligent officer and received them courteously.

O'Rafferty told his story, and added that he should not have thought so much of Harkaway's absence had he not heard that he had enemies within and without the university.

"I am perfectly well aware of the fact," answered the chief.

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes. There are few things that happen in Oxford or in the country in which I do not interest myself personally."

"What do you suspect?" asked O'Rafferty.

"That is my business, sir," replied Manisty. "Excuse my abruptness, but I have made it a rule always to

ask questions, and never to answer them if I can help it. That is my idea of detective science."

"Do you know Hunston?" asked Sir Sydney.

"I should be very glad to put my hand on him at this moment," answered the chief of police. "I have been occupied for some time in making a chain of evidence. Whether it will ever come to any thing time will show; and now, sir, may I ask you a question or two?"

"Fire away, me boy," answered O'Rafferty.

"When you were near the sand-pit, the locality of which I fancy I know pretty well, did you remark any thing?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"Harkaway said he saw a lantern moving about in the pit. By Jove! I had nearly forgotten that."

"He saw a lantern!" said Manisty. "That is quite enough for me, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply, that I will give you some news of Mr. Harkaway before this time to-morrow; but whether he is dead or alive depends upon the mercy of Providence."

"You alarm me," replied O'Rafferty.

"I don't mind breaking through my rule of silence for once," continued the chief of police, "because you and Sir Sydney Dawson are friends of Mr. Harkaway, who is a gentleman the university is properly proud of."

"Well?" said Sir Sydney, anxiously.

"Hunston is, as I suspect, the captain of a gang of robbers, who are called the Black Band. All this winter they have been the terror of the country, breaking into houses and robbing travellers along the roads."

"Is such a thing possible?"

"It is a fact, and has cast a serious reproach on the Oxford police; but so clever is this man Hunston, that we have not been able to capture the band, or find out where they hide."

"Are you any nearer a discovery than you were before?"

"Certainly I am."

"What has given you a clue?"

"In the first place, Mr. Harkaway's disappearance led me to suspect that Hunston had a hand in it, and your

remark about a lantern in the sand-pit, induces me to think that I can find the robbers' haunt."

"In the sand-pit?" said O'Rafferty.

"Exactly. I have played in that sand-pit when a boy, and its walls are full of very remarkable caves," replied Manisty. "How I did not think of it before, I cannot imagine. Leave it all to me, gentlemen, and I will do my best."

"Will it not be dangerous to attack the robbers in their den?" asked Sir Sydney Dawson.

"We shall go in force, and well armed."

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Name it, sir, and, if it is in my power, I will gladly do so," answered the chief of the police, politely.

"Allow me to accompany you. I am not afraid of fighting the ruffians, and I have such a regard for Harkaway that I should like to join in the hunt."

"By the powers!" exclaimed O'Rafferty, "ye mustn't leave me out."

"Gentlemen," said the chief, "I am very sorry indeed to be obliged to refuse your request, but I cannot grant it."

"Why not?"

"Because I should be held responsible for your lives, and public opinion would say that I was not justified in exposing you to risk. These men are armed, and are such desperate villains, from all accounts, that they will fight to the last for their lives and liberty."

"Well," replied Sir Sydney, rising, "I suppose you know best. Good-afternoon, Mr. Manisty; many thanks for your obliging behaviour."

"I am only doing my duty, sir," replied the chief of the police, politely opening the door for his visitors to depart.

Both O'Rafferty and Dawson were well satisfied with the result of their interview, and returned to college, hoping that they had done all that they could for Harkaway's benefit.

That evening, after hall, Kemp left St. Aldate's, and taking the Iffley Road, walked at a quick pace into the country.

He appeared to try and escape observation, and was hurried and nervous in his manner.

CHAPTER LXIX.

KEMP AND HUNSTON.

WHEN Kemp left Oxford, he cut across the country by paths with which he was evidently familiar.

Before evening fell, he reached the old sand-pit.

Descending its rugged sides, he came to the entrance to the cave, where a sentinel ought to have been posted, but no one was about.

Sounds of revelry came from the interior, and a man's voice was heard singing a wine song.

" Let the goblet pass,
And we'll drink another glass,
To the maids of merry, merry England."

Kemp passed boldly along the passage and entered the common apartment, where the band were enjoying themselves.

One was singing, others playing at cards, another working in a corner with a pile of bricks, a trowel, and some mortar, while Hunston sat alone on the top of a cask, smoking a short pipe, and gave himself up to reflection.

On the entrance of the intruder the men sprang up with fierce oaths, and several revolvers were levelled at his head.

" Fools ! " said Kemp, " don't you know me ? "

The pistols were as quickly lowered as they had been raised.

" A nice watch you keep, and a jolly row you kick up to attract notice from the outside," replied Kemp.

" The beggars are getting careless," cried Hunston. " Here, you fellow, you Laugh-at-Death, go and keep guard."

A tall, thick-set, hang-dog-looking man, who had acquired this nickname through his reckless courage, sullenly quitted the card-party, and shouldering a rifle went to the door.

" So you have got Harkaway here ? " Kemp went on.

"How the deuce do you know?" asked Hunston.

"His disappearance is pretty well known in Oxford by this time, thanks to the meddling of Sir Sydney Dawson and a new acquaintance of his called O'Rafferty."

"Do they suspect any thing?"

"That's just what I came to warn you about. They have been to the superintendent of the police," replied Kemp.

"Manisty?"

"That's the man, and I fancy he has his suspicions. O'Rafferty was with him yesterday when you collared him, and he missed him just hereabouts."

"Oh," said Hunston, anxiously; "so you think Manisty has some clue to the cave?"

"I do; and you ought to lose no time in clearing out. What have you done with Harkaway?"

"He is saying his prayers inside there," answered Hunston, carelessly pointing to his dungeon.

"What is that man doing?"

"Bricking him up; that's all."

"Eh?"

Kemp did not quite catch his meaning.

"You know I hate the fellow so infernally that I invented a death for him—something slow and lingering. Shooting or knocking on the head was too good for him, so I thought of the dodge they used to have in convents with refractory monks or nuns, and I am having him shut in the inside dungeon by means of a brick wall."

"It is not safe. Why not kill him out of the way when you have the chance?"

"Isn't it safe? I'll bet you a sovereign it's the safest thing out. Suppose the police come here. Will they ever find him? Not they; and see how he'll suffer."

"There is something in that," answered Kemp, walking towards the man who was at work.

"What's your game now?" asked Hunston.

"I want to have a look at him, that's all. It will do me good just to insult him."

Harkaway was lying huddled up in a corner, and there was a hole left in the newly-made wall, which just enabled his enemy to peep in at him.

"How do you find yourself, my pippin?" Kemp was coward enough to say, in a coarse manner.

The sight of Kemp revived Jack's drooping energies for a moment.

"I wouldn't change places with you," he answered.

"You wouldn't? Then you'd be a flat. If you had the chance, why wouldn't you?"

"Because I'm not a cowardly, lying, sneaking thief," replied Jack boldly, "and even in this fix, I can look back upon my past life with more satisfaction than you ever will be able to do."

"That's all kid," said Kemp, a little abashed.

"Is it kid?" cried Jack. "Wait till you know you've got to die, and see if you'll be as brave as I am. I've got a clear conscience, and can die without funking, while you would be howling and begging for mercy."

"You've got a pretty good cheek for a man in your position," replied Kemp. "But I believe it is put on; you will be hungry and thirsty, and want a little air, as soon as the last brick is put in. How will you feel then?"

"There is something after death," answered Jack solemnly, "and I do not fear that I shall go where your evil actions will take you. But don't talk to me; go to your friend Hunston; you're a nice pair. I am in your power, yet you can not make me talk to you."

"Die, you brute!" returned Kemp, callously, as he turned away and made a sign to the man to finish his work.

There were only a few more bricks to be placed one on the top of the other, and then Jack was hidden from the world perhaps for ever.

In days to come, his mouldering bones or ghastly skeleton might be discovered, and serve for the occasion of a lecture for some learned antiquary, who would make a guess as to what "era" he belonged to.

Hunston and Kemp watched the completion of the horrible work in silence.

At last the man threw down the trowel, and exclaimed—

"Last brick's in, sir."

"That's all right. Go and have a drink," answered Hunston; "what's your lotion. There are all sorts; help yourself."

"Thank you, captain," replied the man, joining his companions.

Turning to Kemp, Hunston said—

"You don't know what a satisfaction that is to me."

"Yes, I do, for I believe I hate the fellow as much as you do," answered Kemp.

"You can't. You haven't known him so long as I have, and he hasn't done so much to you as he has to me. Some people would say it was my own fault and I deserved it. All rot; look at my one arm; did I deserve to lose the other one? Look at my ruined career."

"I shall get the insurance on his life. I made him insure in my favour, you know," remarked Kemp.

"How can you prove his death?"

"They will have to pay if he can't be found, won't they?"

"Query! I'm not so sure about that," replied Hunston. "However, if you get nothing, you will have the satisfaction of knowing he is out of the way."

"Yes, but there is little Emily who won't be glad."

"That's true too, because she won't have me for a husband, and I have no chance there now, for I shall get away from Oxford to-morrow," replied Hunston.

"Do you mean to go to London?"

"I think so. Now you say Manisty is on the scent, it is time to turn this life up. I don't want penal servitude."

"They couldn't make you pick oakum or turn the crank, because you've only one arm," replied Kemp, with a laugh.

"I've two legs, though, and the treadmill is an exercise I have no great longing for."

"Well, I'll join you in London when the term's over. We both have a little money by us; and we will start in some line or other," said Kemp.

"Shan't you take a degree?"

"Not I. I have never been a reading man. No one likes me at the university; all fight shy of me, and I shall cut it. The turf is my game. I can make money at that."

"Well," said Hunston, "we got a tidy pile out of the bank robbery. By the way, how do you get on with the porter?"

"He keeps worrying me for money, and threatens he will split if I don't part, hang him."

"Does he want much?"

"No; only quids; but he's always at it. He had five pounds last week."

"Keep him in tow till you leave. It won't do to be shown up," answered Hunston. "Of course he's no use now, because your idea was to accuse Harkaway of the robbery."

"Exactly; and get him committed for trial on the porter's evidence and some circumstantial proof."

"I understand. It was not a bad plan, though it is useless since we have trapped our fox and settled him out of the way. Have some thing to drink?"

"No, I'm off; and if you'll take my advice, you will disband your gang and step it at once."

"Not I," said Hunston; "I mean to have a spree to-night, and get blind drunk. To-morrow afternoon we will clear out, and you shall have a line from me when I am in London. Stop and make a night of it. Let the bottle pass; and we'll drink another glass to——"

"No, no," interrupted Kemp. "I'm off, I tell you. There is nothing more to talk about. Remember I have warned you, and if any thing happens, it is your fault."

"Who's afraid?" replied Hunston, drinking a tumbler full of spirits and water.

"It is useful to be afraid sometimes. I don't believe in your dare-devil sort of courage."

"Because you never had any," remarked Hunston, refilling his pipe.

"If you are going to be nasty, the sooner I go the better," said Kemp, rising.

"I'm all right. Sit down, I tell you."

"Oh, I know you," said Kemp. "When you get in one of your obstinate, disagreeable moods, I'd as soon stop with Old Nick himself as you."

"I believe I'm a sort of relation of the gentleman's," replied Hunston, whose sallow, gaunt face lighted up with the ghost of a smile.

"You will join him some of these fine days. He's got a tight hold on you," said Kemp.

"There is one comfort,—you'll be there too."

"Don't talk about such things. I've got to walk home in the dark, through a lonely country, and I shall see devils black and devils blue in every hedge. Shut up."

"Have some brandy. It will steady your nerves," said Hunston. "Do, there's a good fellow. It will put you as right as ninepence. Join me. I'm bound to get drunk

to-night ; I'm so thundering pleased to have settled Jack Harkaway at last."

"I'm not in the drinking humour, thank you all the same. Good-night," replied Kemp.

"Well, if you will be an unsociable beast, there is no help for it. Bye-bye."

Kemp shook his head, nodded to the men, went along the corridor, gave Laugh-at-Death a cigar from his case, and urged him to keep a good look-out.

Then he began to walk rapidly back to Oxford.

Before Kemp had gone far, he stopped and took out his pipe, and filled it with tobacco, and struck a light.

The wind was rather high and blew his light out.

In order to protect the match, he went behind a tree.

Suddenly, just as he had succeeded in making the tobacco burn, he heard footsteps.

Naturally cautious, Kemp did not move.

"This is the way, I think," exclaimed a voice.

"Yes," replied another, "a little farther on to the right lies the old sand-pit."

"Step along gently ; we have wary birds to deal with, and the slightest noise will make them take wing," said the first speaker.

"The police, by Jove!" remarked Kemp to himself ; "and a strong body of them too. I know Manisty's voice."

He reflected a moment.

Then he added, as the men, of whom he counted twelve, passed by him.

"What shall I do? I don't like to let Hunston and his pals be caught like rats in a trap. Can I get by and warn them?"

He determined to try.

Getting through a gap in the hedge, he ran as fast as he could, and managed to head the Oxford police, who did not hurry but went along slowly and surely.

Once ahead of them Kemp found no difficulty in gaining the sand-pit.

He descended the side with the dexterity acquired by practice, for he had been in constant communication with Hunston ever since he had taken up his abode in this singular place with the desperate gang of ruffians of whom he was the captain.

Laugh-at-Death challenged him.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend," answered Kemp.

"Pass, friend, and all's well," replied Laugh-at-Death, in true military fashion.

"Be careful," said Kemp; "the Oxford police will be here in ten minutes."

"If they come in here, they are clever," replied Laugh-at-Death.

"Look out, that's all. You shall have your instructions directly."

Kemp, saying this, hurried into the cave and found Hunston, more than half drunk, joining in the chorus of a song.

"Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl,
Until it does run over,
For to-night we'll merry be,
For to-night we'll merry be,
To-morrow we'll be sober,"

he roared out.

Seeing Kemp, he exclaimed—

"Hallo, my beauty. Come back, have you? That's right; I knew you'd think better of it. Join in the chorus; a song's nothing without the coal-box—chorus I mean.

""Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl,
Until it——'"

"Are you mad?" interrupted Kemp.

"Why?"

"The Oxford police are upon you."

Instantly there was a dead silence.

Every man sprang to his feet and grasped the nearest weapon, while the faces of all turned pale with the anxiety and apprehension they could not conceal.

"The police, do you say?" demanded Hunston, choking back a hiccup.

"Yes."

"Is Manisty with them?"

"He is. I met them on the road, and turned back to warn you."

In a moment Hunston was cool and collected.

His drunkenness might have been assumed, but it passed off.

"Tell Laugh-at-Death," he exclaimed, "to shoot the first man who shows his face near the cave's mouth."

A man went away to deliver the order.

"Well, I'm off," said Kemp. "I've done all I can for you. Good-bye, perhaps for ever."

"Don't leave me in the lurch," replied Hunston.

"My escape will be cut off directly."

"No, it won't. Come here," Hunston continued.

Lowering his voice, he added—

"The men will fight better if you stop. I want them to get killed; I shall be best without them, because if they are dead, they can't split, can they?"

"How are we to get out of it?" asked Kemp.

"I have a private staircase—it is a secret to all of them—that leads out to the top of the pit; you and I can make our way out by it, when it gets too hot."

Kemp hesitated.

It is an old saying, that a man or woman who hesitates is lost.

If he had gone away without any further talking, he would have been safe.

But a shot was heard.

This was followed by another and another.

"Laugh-at-Death is at work," replied Hunston. "Keep near me."

He retreated to the end of the cave, and Kemp followed him.

Suddenly Laugh-at-Death ran into the cavern.

"How many are there of them?" asked Hunston.

"A dozen or more," replied Laugh-at-Death. "I've settled one or two, but it's getting too warm, when you have to stand before an army."

More shots were heard, and a fight went on in the corridor, wherein the band made a strong defence.

The robbers, however, were afraid of the police, and fired their revolvers at random, doing little or no harm.

One by one, they came running into the cave, looking frightened and demoralized.

"The game is up," answered Hunston.

"What will you do?" asked Kemp.

"Leave them to their fate," answered Hunston.

"What do I care for them? I only made use of them."

"But your treasure—your gold?"

"I have transmitted it all to London, where it is in a

bank. Deposited in a false name. Still I can get it when I like."

"That is just what I have done," said Kemp. "Shall you go to London?"

"At once."

"I have a good mind to accompany you. My university career is over if any of your men are captured and blow the gaff on me."

A shot whizzed pass Kemp's head as he was speaking.

The police had forced the passage, and the robbers were retreating on all sides before them.

"I'll give them a parting compliment," replied Hunston, levelling his pistol.

He fired, and a policeman fell.

Again and again, he fired, not without success.

Shots echoed and re-echoed through the old cavern.

Laugh-at-Death fought bravely and made a firm stand in the centre of the cave with four men, who were all that remained out of the band.

"This way," whispered Hunston to Kemp.

Darting down a small passage, so narrow that only one could go along it at a time, and so low that he was obliged to stoop for fear of knocking his head against the unequal roof. Hunston ran on as quickly as the difficult nature of the primeval sandstone would allow him.

A flight of steps, roughly hewn in the rock, were revealed by the aid of a thin light filtering down from the moon's rays above.

Quickly ascending this, they found themselves free.

"Good-bye," said Hunston; "we must not keep together."

"I think not; we've more chance alone," replied Kemp.

"What shall you do?"

"Go back to Oxford to-night."

"Can you meet me in London this day week?"

"Yes, I will run up on purpose; where shall I find you?"

"At the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Holborn. Not a word to a soul; good-bye again. I wish you luck," replied Hunston.

The villains separated after shaking hands, and each took a different direction.

Meanwhile, the attack of the police on the cave had been successful.

Two of the robbers were lying badly wounded on the floor, and three constables were in the same condition.

Fortunately, none of the wounds were fatal, though this was not ascertained until afterwards.

"Surrender," exclaimed Manisty, with his pistol cocked.

"Never," replied Laugh-at-Death. "Fire away, my tulip; hit 'em up, they're all cocks."

Manisty fired.

Laugh-at-Death ducked his head, and dashing past the superintendent, made for the entrance of the cave.

Here he was tripped up by a policeman and secured, being brought back, sullen and downcast, carefully handcuffed and guarded.

"Mates," he exclaimed, "on'tder abbler. Eepker arker the oveker in the aultver.

Manisty's quick ears caught the sentence.

"What can he mean?"

He was puzzled.

CHAPTER LXX.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

AFTER a moment's reflection, Manisty told off the men to take the prisoners to the gaol at Oxford.

One he sent for a surgeon to attend to the wounded, whose hurts he himself bandaged up as well as he could with such materials as were at hand.

An hour elapsed before the doctor arrived.

During this time, Manisty was occupied in writing a short account for the local papers, of the capture of the robbers' stronghold.

It ran thus—

"CAPTURE OF THE BLACK BAND.—Last night, Superintendent Manisty, of the Oxford constabulary, acting upon information he had received, proceeded with a picked body of men, to an old sand-pit on Mr. Beal's estate.

"In a cavern formed in the stone, he found, as he had

expected, the members of a desperate gang of robbers known as the Black Band. They have committed numerous robberies in the city of Oxford, and in gentlemen's houses in the country. Even the crime of murder is suspected to have been committed by them. A sanguinary conflict took place between the police and the thieves, which resulted in the defeat of the latter. Some severe wounds were inflicted by pistol-shots on both sides, but as yet no fatal case is reported. It is to be regretted that the captain of these miscreants has escaped. He is a one-armed man, and his name is supposed to be Hunston. Probably a reward will be offered for his apprehension, though the police believe they have a clue to his whereabouts. We will give further particulars in our next issue."

Having finished his brief account of the tragic affair, and modestly refraining from praising himself or his men for their valiant conduct, he again took up his pen.

He was writing on the top of the cask, on which Hunston had so lately been sitting, singing a Bacchanalian ditty.

Pen, ink, and paper he always carried with him in a portable case, so as to be ready for emergencies.

This time he headed his notes—

"THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. HARKAWAY, OF ST. ALDATE'S.—We ought to inform our readers that at present nothing has been heard of Mr. Harkaway, though we are assured by Mr. Superintendent Manisty, that the missing gentleman is very likely to be found in a few hours."

These slips he sent off by a messenger to the *Oxford Times* office, so that the news might appear in the morning edition, which went on the machine at twelve o'clock that night.

When the doctor had dressed the wounds of the injured men, they were transported on hurdles, rudely torn up from a sheep-pen, to the nearest farm-house, where the medical man remained in attendance upon them all night.

It is remarkable, as an instance of the hard-heartedness of habitual thieves, that not one of them said a word about Harkaway, who they all knew was left to die in the vault.

Their idea of honour would not allow them to "split," and as for the prisoner himself, they did not care a rush whether he lived or died.

When Manisty had attended to every thing that his duty required, he dismissed all his men save one.

This man was named Thompson, and he was the most intelligent man in the force.

"I suppose," said Manisty, carelessly, "we may as well get home."

"No, sir," replied Thompson. "If you will allow me, I will stay behind."

"What for?"

"We have not searched the cave yet. There may be money there, and——"

He hesitated.

"Well," said Manisty, with a searching glance.

"I keep my ears open, sir, and have heard of Mr. Harkaway's disappearance. This Hunston, who is the captain of the band we have just put a settler on, is reported to be Mr. Harkaway's enemy."

"What then?"

"We may discover him or his body."

Manisty shook Thompson by the hand.

"You have guessed my thoughts exactly," he said; "they were running in the same direction. I selected you to remain with me because I know your worth, and I asked you questions just to try you. Come along; we will go back to the cave together."

"If we find Mr. Harkaway, sir," said Thompson, "we shall have done a good night's work."

It did not take them long to regain the cave, in which the lamps used by the robbers were still burning.

They commenced a minute inspection of the interior.

Their diligent search resulted in finding a quantity of plate, jewellery, and gold which had fallen to the robbers' share, and which not being so clever as their captain, Hunston, they did not know how to dispose of.

The thieves had resorted to the old device of hiding their plunder in holes in the rock.

When the policemen had completed their search, they sat down and regaled themselves with some ham, bread, and wine, which they found in a barrel.

This had served the robbers as a ~~larder~~.

The secret passage was explored, but led to no new discovery.

"That's how Hunston escaped," remarked Manisty.

"No doubt," said Thompson.

"If we could only have collared him, what a prize he would have been!"

"I believe he murdered the Jew, Manasses, and robbed his house."

"So do I."

All at once a deep groan was heard.

"What is that?" asked Manisty, looking round him uneasily.

"Sounds like a human being," answered Thompson.

"Mr. Harkaway, for a million," cried Manisty. "Listen again. Be careful."

They waited five minutes, but the noise was not repeated.

"It came from this direction," said Thompson, going to the extremity of the cave.

Manisty followed him.

"Look here," exclaimed the superintendent, "the mortar is freshly laid. Do you see these bricks. There is some thing inside. This is the work of men's hands."

"Right, sir," replied Thompson. "I wish I had a crowbar."

"Use your feet. Let's batter this wall down. Go back, take a run, and at it hard with your right foot. I'm with you. So!"

They retreated, and charged the wall.

Their first effort was unsuccessful.

So was the second.

But the third made a breach in the newly-erected wall, and a heap of bricks fell inside.

"Bring a lamp--quick!" exclaimed the superintendent.

Thompson was not slow in obeying this order.

The light flashed in through the aperture.

They beheld Jack, lying huddled up in a corner, exhausted from want of air, and fatigued by thirst and hunger.

"There he is," exclaimed Thompson. "Hurrah! we've found him."

"Get some water; there is some in that black jug," replied Manisty.

"Fancy the blackguards treating a gentleman like that," muttered Thompson, as he fetched the water.

"They are like all thieves—rank cowards," answered Manisty.

A few more kicks rendered the breach practicable, and the two men entered the vault.

"I guessed as much," said Thompson, "when I heard that villain Laugh-at-Death—who has given us more trouble than any rascal we ever had in the country—say—'Don't blab; let's keep the cove in the vault dark.'"

"I heard their slang," answered Manisty. "Lift his head up while I give him a drink, then we will carry him out into the air. Gently does it."

Some water was poured down Jack's throat, and it instantly revived him.

He was reduced to his last gasp.

It was the want of air more than anything else which had affected him, though, of course, hunger and thirst had brought him very low.

Carrying him through the hole in the wall, they laid him down upon a bed of straw in the outer cave.

A current of fresh air fanned his face, and he rapidly came to himself.

The cords which bound him were cut, and the blood circulated more freely, so that he was soon able to speak.

"Who are you?" he asked, looking strangely at Manisty.

"Oxford police, sir," replied the superintendent.

"Where is Hunston?"

"He has escaped, I am sorry to say. But we have captured the rest of the band."

"And Kemp?"

"Kemp," said Manisty, tapping his forehead. "I do not know him."

"I suppose not," said Jack. "Do I owe my life to you?"

"Under Providence, sir."

"I will show my gratitude as well as I can when I get back to Oxford. I thought it was all over with me, but, being an old campaigner, I waited for the off chance."

"Feel very weak, sir?" asked Thompson.

"That I do; and so would you if you had been treated as I have."

"Think you could eat anything!"

"I'd have a good try at it, if I only had half a chance," replied Jack.

They set before him the ham and a cold fowl, which Thompson raked out of the larder, with some bread and beer.

Jack got up and ate like a horse.

Manisty told him of the hint O'Rafferty and Dawson had given him.

How he had successfully acted upon it and broken up the Black Band.

"By Jove!" said Jack, who was beginning to feel himself again, "you deserve a putty medal."

The superintendent laughed.

"I am satisfied, sir," he said, "with having done my duty."

Jack drank another glass of beer, which in his exhausted state took effect upon him.

Going to the straw bed he murmured—

"Think shall go to sleep now."

The next instant he fell into a profound slumber.

"The best thing he could do," said Manisty. "I shall go back to Oxford now. You stop here, Thompson, and come back with Mr. Harkaway when he wakes. Tell him I shall not say anything to the newspapers until I see him, because I do not know how he would like every thing explained."

"Yes, sir," replied Thompson.

They shook hands, and the superintendent walked back to the city.

Jack's breathing was heavy and stertorous, but he had eaten well, and there was little doubt that he would be all right when he awoke.

His life had been saved by a miracle.

Hunston and Kemp were beaten once more, and this time more severely than they had ever been before.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE POISONED GLASS.

It was a lovely morning.

Sir Sydney Dawson, O'Rafferty and Tom Carden were sitting smoking in Harkaway's room.

Manisty had told them that they might expect their friend in an hour or two.

He was staying at a farm-house.

Monday had been to take him some clothes, and, as he had had a day and a night's rest, he was quite himself again.

Harvey, who had recovered from the effects of his wound, had been able to come out.

He also came to Jack's rooms to welcome him on his return.

As he entered everyone shook him warmly by the hand.

"Glad to see you about again, Harvey," said Sir Sydney.

"All right, old boy, eh?" said Tom Carden.

"I haven't the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, but if he's a friend of O'Harkaway's—I give him the honour of the O, because I am sure his ancestors must have been Irish chiefs—I am glad to see him," remarked O'Rafferty.

Harvey gracefully acknowledged the salutation.

"I'm told," he exclaimed, "that you expect Jackson, and, though I'm a little shaky, I thought I would come out to meet him."

"How's the widow?" asked Sir Sydney.

Harvey blushed.

"Do you mean the Duchess of Woodstock?" he said.

"Yes."

"Oh, she is quite well, thank you," replied Harvey, looking rather foolish.

"I don't like widows," exclaimed O'Rafferty; "they are too knowing."

"Hilda," said Harvey, "never loved her husband. She has assured me that she only married him to secure a position."

"Don't get excited, my dear fellow," replied Sir Sydney. "How many thousands a-year has she?"

"Something like fifteen."

"Oh, Moses, come in!" cried O'Rafferty. "I'd marry her if she was third hand and as ugly as the mother of Satan."

"Perhaps you won't have the chance," replied Harvey.

"Oh, it's like that, is it?" replied O'Rafferty; "well, I don't blame you, me boy. 'You've been making hay while the sun shines. More power to your elbow.'"

"Is it really a match between you and the fair Hilda?" asked Sir Sydney, looking up, carelessly.

"I shall be very much annoyed if you say any thing of the sort," said Harvey crossly. "The Duchess of Woodstock has been very kind to me during my illness, that is all."

"I'm sorry I spoke."

"There is nothing to be sorry for," continued Harvey; "only I object to having a lady's name coupled with mine, when there is no occasion for it."

At this moment when the discussion was becoming very disagreeable, Monday burst into the room.

"Here him come, sare. Me bring him back in a carriage. Him all right now."

"Is he hurt at all, Monday?" asked Harvey, anxiously.

"No, Master Dick, him sound as um roach; nothing the matter."

"I could fancy that we were in Spain or Greece," replied Sir Sydney Dawson, "and we were awaiting the return of a captive, after paying a heavy ransom to brigands."

"Ah," said Harvey, "you don't know Hunston so well as I do. Nothing would stop that fellow."

"Perhaps he is an Irishman," remarked Sir Sydney, who detested O'Rafferty, and wished to annoy him.

"What?" replied O'Rafferty. "Is it a blackguard thief you want to make an Irishman? By the powers, you are not a gentleman, sorr, and I hate a cad."

"You can't be very fond of yourself, then," said Sir Sydney, quietly.

"Be jabbers and if you say that again, I'll knock you into the middle of next week," cried O'Rafferty, furiously.

Turning to Harvey, Sir Sydney remarked—"The worst of the Celtic race is, they are so anxious for rows."

O'Rafferty was about to make a retort when Jack entered, looking radiant, though slightly pale.

His appearance was the signal for a general handshaking and welcome.

Every thing disagreeable was forgotten, and each vied with the other to evince his delight at Jack's return.

"Where have you been?" drawled Dawson. "What is all this mystery?"

"I thought I was going to kingdom come," replied Jack.

"How was that?"

"An old enemy of mine was the captain of a band of burglars, and—the fact is O'Rafferty and I got tight together."

"Spake for yerself, my dear bhoy," said O'Rafferty.

"Well," replied Jack, "I'd say you were sober, but I don't like telling an untruth."

"Very nate indade," replied O'Rafferty; "that's one to you, me friend."

"Anyhow," cried Jack, "I fell in with the thieves, and my enemy Hunston bricked me up in a vault; the police came, exterminated the band, and I was set free. That's the short of it; you shall have the long of it if you like."

"It's quite a romance," remarked Sir Sydney. "I should write a book about it if I were you."

"As I am not you, I shan't do anything of the sort," replied Jack, laughing.

Going to the door, he called Monday.

"Sare," replied the black, grinning all over his face in his delight at seeing his master again.

"Open a couple of bottles of fiz. It's early to begin drinking, but we don't kill a pig every day," said he.

"Yes, sare."

"And I say, where's Buster?"

"Mr. Buster all right, sare; him not cry him eyes out," answered Monday.

"Oh, you black villain," said Buster, coming in from the outer room, "I've wetted two large sheets a-crying for Mr. Harkaway."

"You one big lie," screamed Monday; "you drunk last night in the 'Three Cups.' Perhaps you crying drunk. I hear you say, good job if Mr. Harkaway never come back more."

"You double-dyed scoundrel!" said the scout. "I never see the like of you, no, never; and I've seen a few black-hearted ones in my time, but it remained for a black-skinned un to lick the lot."

"I give you one poke with spear," cried Monday running to the rack.

"I'll give you a jolly good English punch on the head, you black thief," replied Buster.

"Hold your row," said Jack.

"However, Mr. Harkaway, you can keep such an inky abortion in your service I don't know," cried Buster.

"There is half a crown for you," said Sir Sydney. "Inky abortion' is good. I admire that phrase."

"Thank you, sir, you're a gentleman," said Buster, pocketing the money.

"Go to Mr. Kemp's rooms," said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"And if he is there, tell him, with my compliments, I shall be glad to see him."

Buster went away, and Jack handed his friends cigars, and poured out the wine for them.

He and Harvey were like two brothers meeting after a long separation.

They talked together for a length of time, and Sir Sydney exclaimed—

"If you two have done spooning, I'm on for a mild game at loo. Limit it to four-and-sixpence."

"Just as you like," answered Jack.

"I can't go higher, for my guardian has been very hard on me lately, and the Jews are equally disagreeable. My borrowing powers are like my loo."

"Why?"

"Because they are both limited."

Jack laughed, and produced the cards.

They played for nearly two hours, when Buster returned.

"Excuse me, will you?" exclaimed Jack. "I want to speak to my scout."

He left his stake in the game on the table, and asked anyone who threw up to play for him.

Going to Buster, he said—

"You've been gone a long time."

"Yes, sir; very sorry, but couldn't help it. Mr. Kemp has left."

"Has Mr. Kemp left?" asked Jack, surprised.

"Yes, sir; taken his name off the books this morning."

"Did you see him?" asked Jack.

"Well, yes, sir; I did see him," replied Buster in a hesitating manner.

"What did he say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nonsense, he must have said something," urged Jack.

"No, sir; he didn't."

"Where is he now?"

"Gone away, sir."

"Gone! Where?"

"Don't know, sir," replied Buster.

"You're a fool," said Jack. "Get out of my sight. Either you know a good deal, and won't speak, or—but I'm only wasting my breath in talking to you. I shall get a fresh scout."

"Perhaps you'd like a black one, sir," replied Buster, impudently.

"Look here," said Jack, "don't you be cheeky, or I'll give you a jolly good hiding."

Buster went away muttering to himself, but what he said was inaudible to his master who rejoined his companions.

The game went on with varying success, and another hour elapsed.

"Monday!" exclaimed Jack.

Buster made his appearance.

"Mr. Monday, sir, is washing up," he replied.

"Oh, bring me some soda and brandy, and fill these gentlemen's glasses with champagne," said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

The scout poured out the sparkling wine, and went into the other room to get the soda and brandy.

"My deal," exclaimed Jack, "and there's a miss."

"No, it's a single ; all play," replied Harvey.

The cards were dealt, and Buster returned with a large glass foaming with soda and water.

Jack raised it to his lips.

He was about to drink, when Monday rushed into the room.

"You not drink, sare," he cried, "you not drink ; I saw English white thief put some thing inside. It poison you."

Jack placed the glass on the table.

All looked blankly at one another.

Buster stood like a statue, and neither moved nor spoke.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE BANK PORTER.

JACK was the first to recover himself.

Turning to Monday, he said—

"What do you mean by saying that my scout put some thing in my glass?"

"Me see him do it, sare," replied Monday.

"Are you sure?"

"Sure as that Tuesday come after Monday," replied the black.

"I don't want any of your jokes," said Jack, taking the glass in his hand again. "It is easy to see whether you are right or wrong. You persist in saying that the scout has tampered with the glass?"

"That it, sare," answered Monday nodding his head up and down emphatically.

"I will take it to a doctor, who shall analyse its contents, and, if there is poison inside, we shall know."

Buster recovered himself a little.

"As if I should do such a thing, sir," he said. "Is a respectable man's character to be thrown away in a moment on the word of a black thief like that?"

"I don't accuse you," answered Jack.

"Throw it away, sir, and laugh at it as a bit of Mr. Monday's playful ways," urged Buster.

"No. It shall go to a doctor, and if poison is found inside, we shall know who put it there."

Seeing that he was determined to sift the matter thoroughly, Buster's manner changed.

"You need not take the trouble, sir," he said. "I did put some thing in the glass. Mr. Monday's right."

"What was it?" asked Jack, sternly.

"I don't know."

"Where did you get it?"

"Mr. Kemp gave it me, sir," replied Buster, after some hesitation.

"As I suspected," said Jack, "you were not two hours gone to deliver a simple message. So he got hold of and tampered with you. Tell us all about it."

"At first, sir, I said I would not do it, but he gave me five pounds, and told me it would only make you go to sleep, and it was good for you to have plenty of sleep after what you had gone through, and I consented at last; but I didn't mean any harm to you, sir. May I drop dead on the floor this minute if I did."

"I believe you," replied Jack, "for I don't think you would be such a fool as to risk your life in taking mine without an object. Be more careful in future."

"Do you let me off, sir?" cried Buster, delightedly, "I'll do any thing to——"

"Don't make a noise, my good fellow," replied Jack. "Hand over the fiver Mr. Kemp gave you, to Monday. He saved my life perhaps, and deserves a reward."

With a very ill grace, Buster parted with the money, and slunk away, leaving Monday grinning at his evident chagrin.

"Him not like give up money," he remarked. "Break him heart to part with tin, Mast' Jack."

"You go and play. We don't want you any more," said Jack.

When the door closed, Jack said—

"Did you ever see such a determined enemy as Kemp is? He is as bad as Hunston."

"Perhaps acting under Hunston's orders," replied Harvey.

"That I am sure of, because they were together in the cave. What can I do with him?"

"Let him go," replied Sir Sydney. "This is his parting

shot. You hear that he has taken his name off the books of the college."

"I don't want my name mixed up in a criminal prosecution," exclaimed Jack, "but I must call in the protection of the law, if they won't let me alone."

"Oh! I should think you had heard the last of them by this time," remarked Harvey. "Hunston will not show his face for fear of Manisty."

"Very true; but Hunston has got a way of working in the dark, even if he is miles away. He works through other people, if you understand me. I will give you an instance. You remember the bank robbery."

"Yes, it was on the night of me little dinner," said O'Rafferty.

"Exactly. Well, I never told you how they tried to mix me up in that business. Kemp got me to take my pass-book there. Well, Hunston had wounded the manager, and robbed the safe. I saw him go out, and was weak enough, instead of crying out about what I had seen, to sneak past the porter, and get back to college."

"And of course you had a visit from Kemp the next morning, and a lecture on circumstantial evidence," observed Sir Sydney.

"He hadn't the decency to wait till morning. He was on to me like lightning that night. You know I had a little money left me, and I had to give him half and insure my life in his favour for a heavy sum."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harvey, "that explains it all."

"Be jabers, it's no wonder at all, at all, that he wants to make cold mate of ye," said O'Rafferty.

"I wonder what the next move will be?" remarked Jack. "The constant suspense I live in makes me as nervous as a dog. If I pass my greats, I shall take a cruise down the Mediterranean next long."

Monday knocked at the door.

"Some mans to see you, sare," he said.

"What is he like?" asked Jack.

"Common-looking man, sare. Says you not know his name, but he friend of Mr. Kemp, sare, and if I tell that, then you see him at once. He say he some thing to do with bank."

"Oh! wait a minute," replied Jack, who added—

"This is some new dodge. Do you three fellows

mind going into my dressing-room while I see the man? You can have the door ajar, and hear every thing that is said. Your evidence may be useful."

Making no objection, Sir Sydney Dawson, Harvey, and O'Rafferty went into the dressing-room.

Tom Carden had gone away some time before, after satisfying himself that Jack, as an athlete, was in no way impaired by his adventures.

The visitor was ushered in by Monday, and Jack instantly recognised him as the bank porter.

With an insolent familiarity, the fellow sat down with his cap on.

"I suppose you know me again, Mr. Harkaway?" he exclaimed.

"Take your cap off, and stand up," cried Jack angrily.

"How dare you take such a liberty?"

"Beg pardon," replied the porter, "but we're pretty equal, I think; howsomever, if it pleases you, I'll do it."

He rose, and removed his cap, adding—

"I've come on business."

"What do you want?"

"Money."

"What for?" continued Jack.

"To hold my tongue. Mr. Kemp used to pay me, and was always good for a quid when I called. Lor! how he used to hate the sight of me," said the porter with a chuckle.

"Mr. Kemp has quitted the university," said Jack.

"I know it, and that's why I'm on to you. Give me some thing to keep quiet, and I'll say nothing about the robbery."

"You can't say I did it."

"I'd say any thing. You were there at the time, and I could have you arrested," replied the porter.

"Well, you shall have five pounds," answered Jack, "only you must admit that it was Kemp and his friend who robbed the bank."

"Of course it was," replied the porter; "they had squared me, and it was arranged that it should be fixed on you. Only how are you going to prove it?—that's where the shoe pinches."

"Weren't you ashamed to lend yourself to such a conspiracy?"

"Well, you see, I'm a poor man with a family, and if I can make a bit over and above my wages, it's all clear business to me," answered the porter.

Jack advanced to the dressing-room and threw the door open.

"I think you have heard enough, gentlemen," he said. The three men stepped forth.

"Quite enough to convince us that this fellow has come here to extort money," answered Sir Sydney Dawson.

The porter turned pale.

"That's what I call shabby," he cried. "I didn't bargain for no spying, but give us the posh, and I'll say no more about it."

"Not a rap do you have out of me," replied Jack. "Be off, or as I live, I will prosecute you. Take care never to show your ugly face here again. These gentlemen are my witnesses that you came here to extort money from me, which is an indictable offence. Be off this instant."

The porter was about to speak again.

But Jack took him by the back of the neck and kicked him into the passage, while Monday finished his expulsion by running him out on to the landing and shutting the door in his face.

"That's lucky," said Jack. "It is the last of my difficulties successfully tided over. With Hunston a fugitive from justice, with a price on his head, and Kemp gone away from the university for fear of exposure, I think I may look forward to a little peace."

Everyone congratulated him.

"It hasn't come before I wanted it," continued Jack, "for I mean to go into the schools for my bachelor's degree, and I want to come out well."

"Get a double first, Jack," said Harvey.

"I wish I might," answered Jack, with a faint smile, and an eager look, which clearly showed what his latent ambition was.

After this, the party separated, Jack's friends being perfectly satisfied with the result of his various persecutions.

Every thing went on very smoothly for a few weeks.

Harvey took up his residence again in college, but was a constant visitor at Hilda's house.

One day he met Jack in the Corn Market, and with a

glowing face, told him that he had proposed to Hilda and been accepted.

"I'm glad of it, Dick," replied Jack. "How many thousands a year is it?"

"Oh, bother the money! I never thought of that; it is the girl I love. She is so good and nice—you don't really know half her good qualities, Jack," exclaimed Harvey.

"I suppose you'll cut me, now you are going to be such a swell?" said Jack.

"Not I. You don't suppose I would cut an old friend, and such a friend as you've been to me, Jack."

"It was only my chaff," said Jack, seeing a tear start to his friend's eye.

"Hilda loves me dearly," continued Harvey. "She never cared for the duke, whom she treated with the utmost coldness. She has assured me she was only a wife in name to him."

"That's all right," replied Jack. "Bless you, my children! May you be happy!"

They both laughed, and strolled on till they came to the theatre.

A huge poster announced that there would, that day week, be a grand ball.

Jack read aloud—

"Grand Masked Ball. Next Wednesday will be given a grand *Bal Masque*, by special desire.—N. B.—No one admitted, unless in costume or wearing masks. Tickets five shillings each, to be had at the box-office."

"I shall go," said Jack. "Will you come?"

"No, I think not. Hilda would not like it," answered Harvey.

"Please yourself. I am on like grub," replied Jack.

They neither of them saw a dark figure hiding behind a half-open door.

It was Kemp.

"Going to the ball, are you, Mr. Harkaway!" he muttered. "I'll be there and spoil your enjoyment. You've licked me at every turn, but I'm in Oxford again on the quiet, just to see if I can't get at you again somehow."

Still strolling about, they found themselves again in the Corn Market.

Close by was a tobacconist's shop.

"Look," said Harvey, "there is Dawson."

"Spooning as usual," replied Jack. "He is always there after that little girl with the blue eyes and the fair hair. La Favorita he calls her."

"Does she like him?"

"I think so. It's a great shame, though, for in his position, he knows very well he can't marry her, and those flirtations generally end in something bad."

"How moral you're getting," remarked Harvey.

"Is it fair? I ask you. The girl, I suppose, has friends, and is respectable. What is to become of her?" asked Jack. "I shall go in and buy a cigar."

"All right, stroll on," said Harvey, shaking his hand.

Jack entered the shop.

Sir Sydney coloured as he saw Harkaway, and the girl became a deep crimson.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

LA FAVORITA.

"COME in, Harkaway," said Sir Sydney Dawson, seeing Jack at the door of the tobacconist's, "and give us your valuable opinion on a point of importance."

Jack walked up to the counter and said—

"How do, Ada?"

The girl who officiated behind the counter smilingly answered that she was quite well, and hoped Mr. Harkaway, who was an old customer, was the same.

"None so dusty," replied Jack, "all things considered."

Ada, or La Favorita, as it had pleased Sir Sydney to christen her, was a pretty little blue-eyed, flaxen-haired child of seventeen or thereabouts, with well-formed mouth and dimpled chin; her nose was what Tennyson has defined a slight "snub" to be—

"Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower."

in his latest poem.

Altogether she was a winning, fairy-like little thing.

"What is this important point?" asked Jack, helping himself to a choice Partaga, and putting down a shilling to pay for it, that being its price.

"I have told the Favorita that she is the prettiest girl in Oxford, and she won't believe it," replied Sir Sydney.

"Modesty," said Jack.

The girl blushed and said, in a low, sweet voice, "an excellent thing in woman," as Shakespeare, that profound judge of men and things, says—

"Sir Sydney is always paying me compliments, Mr. Harkaway."

"Is the truth a compliment, Harkaway?" said Dawson.

"I appeal to you as a man who is going to take up logic, when he goes into the schools."

"Logic," replied Jack, "has nothing to do with love-making. When in love, a man must be in a state of mind which enables him to sink below reasoning."

"Rise superior to it, you mean," replied Sir Sydney, with a laugh.

"Well, I'm sure I've never been in love and don't want to be," said La Favorita.

"Don't tell stories, Ada. Where do you expect to die when you go to?—I mean—put it the other way, you know," said Sir Sydney, looking at her reproachfully.

"Love is all nonsense," she cried, playing restlessly with the Partagas in the box.

"If you've never been in love, how can you know?" asked Sir Sydney.

She made no answer.

"Let those cigars alone," he went on, tapping her knuckles with a briar-root pipe; "you will spoil them. I never saw such fidgetty mischievous creatures as women are."

"You're always scolding and finding fault with me," said Ada.

"Don't worry the poor child," remarked Jack.

"Poor child!" repeated Sir Sydney. "You should hear her rap out at me sometimes; don't you, Ada?"

"When you deserve it," she answered, casting down her eyes.

"What do you think she wants now?" continued the baronet.

"Couldn't even form the foundation of a remote guess. Is it a new bonnet?"

"Nothing half so mild as that."

"What, then?"

"Feminine caprice amounts to tyranny. I am commanded to take my Favorita to the masked ball."

"Why not?" continued Ada.

"Because," said Jack, "a girl of your age is best out of such scenes."

Ada tossed her pretty head angrily. "Anyone would think," she said, "that you were my father."

"Not old enough for that" replied Jack.

"Well, my brother, anyhow."

"Have you got a brother?" asked Jack, with a searching glance.

"Two."

"Let me ask you one question: Do you think they would like to see you going to a masked ball at the theatre, with a casual acquaintance, who is your superior in birth, education, fortune, breeding and position?"

Jack spoke severely, but he did it for the girl's good.

She, however, did not like the tone he adopted at all, for her face became as red as possible, and tears came to her eyes.

"I didn't think you'd insult me, Mr. Harkaway," she exclaimed.

"Hang it all," said Sir Sydney. "You're a little too hard on my Favorita; I don't like it."

"Very sorry if I've said anything I ought not," replied Jack, "I only meant it for the best. Come outside, Dawson, and let me say a word to you."

Sir Sydney followed him to the door rather sullenly, and exclaimed—

"What on earth is the matter with you to-day?"

"I don't like to see a poor girl like that going to perdition. It doesn't matter to me whether you get wild or not, but I think you are behaving shamefully in making the girl love you. What can the end of it be?"

Sir Sydney got angry.

"That's my business," he answered. "I won't allow you or any other man to speak to me like this, and I don't thank you for your infernal impertinence."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"What have you to do with it? Is the girl any thing to you?" continued Sir Sydney.

"Nothing."

"Well, then, be good enough in future to turn your attention to your own affairs. You have enough to do with your Hunstons and your Kemps."

"You needn't be insolent," said Jack.

"You provoked it."

"I only warned you for your own good. You have sisters of your own. How would you like——"

"You shall not talk to me. By Heaven, this is too much," cried Sir Sydney. "Leave me at once unless you want a riot in the street."

"I have done my duty," said Jack. "Good-morning; you will not blame me when you are calmer. I know how these flirtations end nine times out of ten. You can't marry the girl. What is her future? Suicide or shame."

Jack strode away without another word, and Sir Sydney Dawson, very pale, re-entered the shop.

Those parting words of Jack's rang in his ears like a sentence of death.

Suicide or shame!

But lighting a fresh cigar, he stifled the still small voice of his conscience, and made *La Favorita* happy by a promise that he would take her to the masked ball.

"You do love me, dearest?" said Ada, looking at him tearfully.

"Better than any thing else in the world, little goose," replied Sir Sydney.

"And you won't let anyone set you against me?"

"Is it likely? I am not a child, my pretty baby."

"And some day you will keep your promise and—and make me your wife?" she went on.

"Some day," he answered drily.

"Oh, I can trust you," she continued. "Better men than you, dear, have married worse women than me."

A couple of gowmsmen coming into the shop stopped any further conversation of an amorous nature.

Jack walked up St. Giles to calm himself.

"It's a rascally shame," he said to himself, "that any fellow should take a mean advantage of an unsuspecting, innocent girl like that. I wonder how men can be such blackguards."

In the midst of his reflections, he ran up against Mr. Mole.

"Hullo, Harkaway!" said Mr. Mole. "The very man I wanted to see."

"What's up now, sir?" asked Jack.

"A bachelor's party. Nothing more nor less."

"Are you going to give one?"

"I am. I have gone back to my old house. Being a bachelor I can do as I like, and the fact is, I want to make myself popular," continued Mr. Mole.

"What for?" inquired Jack.

"There is going to be an election for the city of Oxford, and I have determined to stand."

"You, sir!" cried Jack in astonishment.

"Why not? Am I not a man of discretion, with some money? For a long time past I have felt that my light has been hidden under a bushel."

"Well," said Jack, humouring him, "there are many worse men in Parliament than you, Mr. Mole."

"Yes," answered Mole, drawing himself up proudly, "my career is that of a statesman. I am a born politician. The senate of this great nation shall thrill with my eloquence, and the admiring populace shall cry aloud—'A Mole, a Mole for ever! Hurrah for the people's friend!'"

"You will go in as a liberal?"

"Certainly—I may say as a Radical."

"Then you've no chance for Oxford, sir," replied Jack.

"That remains to be seen. I shall challenge the suffrages of the electors, and stir up their dormant patriotism. Why should the people remain serfs? Wait till I issue my address; I am busily engaged on it now."

"I wish you luck, sir," answered Jack.

"The people are crushed; they are poor. In fact, I just now had a convincing proof of the demand for money in this city, for some one picked my pocket in Corn Market as I was standing by the 'Clarendon,' rehearsing my speech to the electors."

Jack laughed.

"Come to my house, Harkaway," continued Mr. Mole. "and give me the benefit of your advice."

He took Jack's arm, and they walked on together.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

MR. MOLE'S AMBITION.

MR. MOLE ushered Jack into his study, and opened a bottle of wine, which made him loquacious and inclined to be communicative.

"I am going to open my heart to you, Harkaway," he said.

"Thank you, sir," replied Jack.

"It matters little whether I am successful or not in this electoral contest; I must go to the poll, however."

"What for?"

"It is part of my programme."

"I don't understand," said Jack.

"You will presently. One of my pupils, Lord Tollington——"

"The man I fought with swords?"

"Precisely. Well, his friends are high in office in the present ministry, and I have asked him for a post."

"What post?" demanded Jack.

"Governor of Limbi."

"But Limbi does not belong to the British Crown."

"I know that. It does not at present, but I have been in communication with Monday, who, you know, is king of Limbi. He has consented, for the sum of one thousand pounds, which I am going to give him, to formally hand over Limbi to Queen Victoria."

"Is Monday such a fool as to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage?"

"He says he shall never go back, because he should die if he left you," replied Mr. Mole.

"I believe the poor fellow is devoted to me."

"I know, and more than that, he is in love with an English girl."

"I suspected as much. Who is she?"

"That pretty, fair-haired, blue-eyed girl in a cigar shop in Corn Market."

"La Favorita?" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"That's what your friend, Sir Sydney Dawson calls

her, I believe. But she does not dislike Monday, or at least she used not to. Perhaps Sir Sydney has cut Monday out."

"What did Monday tell her?"

"She should be the queen of Limbi. He will keep his rank still, you know; we can't help him calling himself His Highness the King of Limbi, though he will have no kingdom."

"Go on," said Jack.

"Tollington says I must bring my name prominently forward before the government will notice me; that's why I am going to stand for Oxford city as an advanced Liberal."

"I begin to see."

"Whether I win or not I shall have my name in all the papers and in everybody's mouth, and when Limbi, which may be an important settlement for the English in the Malay Archipelago, is the property of the British crown, I shall be appointed governor."

"Who more fit?" said Jack.

"No one; have I not spent many months of my valuable life there?"

"Of course you have."

"Fancy going out there with plenary powers, and being called 'your excellency.' It is a dream of bliss, Harkaway."

"Well, sir, you know best," replied Jack. "For my part I'd rather stop here."

"Every man to his taste, as the French say. Drink up and have another cigar. You will rally round me at the election?"

"When does it take place?"

"The writ will be issued in a day or two. My address will be published in all the papers the day after to-morrow," replied Mole.

"I'll be there, sir, so you had better look out for yourself."

"Don't make jokes, Harkaway. We have no ballot yet, and bricks at the nomination are as objectionable as rotten eggs," said Mr. Mole with a dismal smile.

"I can only say I wish you every success, sir; and now, sir, what about this wonderful feed of yours?" asked Jack.

"It will be a supper party, and I shall invite fifty Oxford men, who will be chiefly selected from amongst my pupils."

"Yes, that will do."

"Ambonia is dead, with the other little offspring of ill-judged affection."

"You have a right to suppose so."

"The curse of my life is gone off in a balloon—Heaven be thanked for all its mercies! I feel myself a man again. Oh, Harkaway, may you be spared the awful infliction of a vicious, ill-tempered wife, whom you are afraid to beat and can not control by kindness."

"I hope so, sir," said Jack, adding— "By the way. I have a recipe of Monday's for what he calls a Limbi pie."

"Name it a *Paté de Limbi*; every thing must be French in cooking."

"As you like. Will you allow me to contribute a Limbi *Paté* to your supper?"

"With pleasure."

"It's spiffing," continued Jack. "Crack it up to your guests, and if they say they ever tasted any thing finer, I won't believe them."

Mr. Mole gladly accepted the offer, and the invitations were sent out for Thursday evening, which gave him three days for preparation.

Everybody liked Mole, and no one refused.

Tom Carden, Harvey, Dawson, O'Rafferty, Lord Tollington, Franklin, and a host of other men belonging to different colleges expressed their intention of being present.

The fact was that Jack had whispered to Harvey that there would be some fun.

And when Jack said there would be fun, it was a moral certainty that amusement would not be very far off at the finish.

Going to the confectioner's, Jack ordered the crust of a pie to be made a foot and a half high, with a diameter of ten inches.

This was to be sent to his room on the morning of Thursday.

Calling Monday, he said—

"I want to have a little conversation with you."

"Yes, sare," replied Monday.

"So you have sold Limbi to Mr. Mole."

"Mist' Mole ! Him tell you that, sare?"

"He did."

"It am all true. What Monday want with mouldy old Limbi? Him never leave you, sare."

"How about getting married?" said Jack.

Monday did an apology for a blush.

"P'raps she won't have black man, sare," he replied.

"I'll tell you what, Master Monday; you're going on in a very sly way," said Jack. "The girl's a pretty one though, and if you can get her you'll be lucky."

"She not so kind now as used to was to be, sare," answered Monday, as a cloud passed over his face.

"You've got Sir Sydney Dawson to thank for that," remarked Jack.

"Ha!" cried Monday, all his savage nature coming into his face, "you know the lady me love, sare?"

"Yes; little Ada in the cigar-shop."

"In Corn Market?"

"Yes."

"And Sare Sydney he talk love words to her?"

"She's going to the ball with him—the masked ball, I mean, which takes place next week," said Jack.

"Ha! Monday be there, dressed as a chief, with all his kill weapons, and——"

"I say," interrupted Jack, "don't you look so murderous. You can't kill people in this country without having your neck stretched for it."

"Will Mast' Jack do what he can with Missey Ada for poor Monday?" answered the black, the rage dying out of his eyes at this reproof.

"Yes, I will gladly, for I think you might make the girl happy with the money Mr. Mole is going to give you, and I fear Dawson means—but no matter, I'll put a spoke in your wheel if I can."

"Thank you, Mast' Jack. Monday um humble servant, sare. You put spoke in um wheel for Monday, and um not forget you, sare," replied Monday.

One of the best traits of his character was his strong sense of gratitude.

"Look here, you piece of ebony," continued Jack, "I want you to do some thing for me."

"Yes, sare!"

"Has that pie thing come?"

"It in other room, sare."

"Bring it here, and go to Mole's house and steal his kid. He's only got one left now. Ambonia has taken the other in the balloon as I told you, and I fear Mr. O'Rafferty's shot killed it, but there is no telling, as those nigger brats have as many lives as a cat."

"Steal um kid, sare," asked Monday, grinning; "what um do that for?"

"A lark; you'll see presently, and I say, bring in half-a-dozen pounds of treacle."

Monday nodded, and went to entice the child away from his father's house.

This was not difficult, as the little Isaac liked Monday, who spoke his mother's language.

He found him playing in the street, having escaped from the watchful care of Mrs. Bimms, who had been reinstated in her position as housekeeper.

Mrs. Bimms hated the black child.

"Let the ugly little nigger thing run in the street, drat it!" she said; "and perhaps it will have the luck to get run over."

This, however, was not its fate.

CHAPTER LXXV.

A DISH FOR A KING.

IN about half an hour Monday returned with the little Mole, who was very friendly with Jack, and ran up to him.

"Will you stop and play in my rooms?" asked Jack.

"Ycs; me stop play. What give play with?" replied the lad, who was now about four years old.

"Oh, take down a spear and play at pricking Matabella."

This, it will be remembered, was Monday's name.

"Thank you, sare, me rather not," exclaimed Monday.

"You tell him prick one beast scout, they call him Buster."

The boy amused himself with looking at Jack's trophies. All at once he said—

"You see maman?"

"No," answered Jack.

"She come back soon with little brother?"

"I hope so."

"You not sure? Me like maman best than papa. He not so kind, and Mrs. Bimms me hate. She snake. If I had spear I would prick. She slap um here," said the little fellow, putting his hand behind him.

Just then there was a knock at the door.

"Open, Sesame!" exclaimed Jack.

Monday opened the door, and to their great surprise who should walk into the room, but Ambonia, leading the other offspring of Mr. Mole's passion by the hand!

The brothers ran into one another's arms.

"Well," said Jack, in the greatest astonishment, "may I be knocked into the middle of next week, if this isn't enough to take a fellow's breath away."

"You not expect see me," replied Ambonia, smiling.

"Frankly, I did not. Monday, hand Mrs. Mole a chair."

"Yes, sare. How um do, mum?" said Monday.

"Oh, I'm as well as can be expected, Matabella," answered Ambonia. "I been up in a balloon."

"Tell us all about it, said Jack.

"Me go up, up, up—and oh, long way; over France—and then the gas got out, and the balloon it come down and stick in tree, and I fall."

"Were you hurt?"

"Yes, little hurt, but I hold the child. He got shots in him, but not dead."

"That's a comfort."

"Peoples in farm take me in, and when all well, and the child not much more matter with him, I sell my watch, chain, ring, all, pay peoples, and come back. Know you one friend mine. Come to you first, Jack. Always liked you."

"Thank you," replied Jack, with an attempt at a blush. "Very much grattered and flattified, as Carden would say."

"Now, you tell me all 'bout Mist' Mole, my husband."

"Certainly. He's all right. It wasn't his fault, you know, that the balloon went off."

"Me know. It was nasty man who shoot poor child mine, and cut rope of balloon," said Ambonia.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Mole's been inconsolable, cried his eyes out, used two sheets an hour to dry them—pocket-handkerchiefs no good at all."

"Ah! Isaac love me still," replied Ambonia, wiping her eyes.

"I see you have been kind to other child," she exclaimed, calling the little fellow to her, and embracing it.

"Which is which?" asked Jack.

"The one shot, him mine, but the other, him Alfura's; both call me maman."

"Now, look here," said Jack, "will you do what I tell you?"

"Yes, me do."

"Mr. Mole gives a party to-night, and I want to have a lark with him."

"Where he now?"

"At the old house in St. Giles'. He's given up the country one and come back."

"Ah; he come back. He got that Mrs. Bimms?" asked Ambonia, her eyes sparkling.

"Yes. He couldn't get anyone else. You can sack her easily; don't kick up a row now."

"Me wait, if you help me," replied Ambonia, biting her lips.

"Of course I will."

"What um want Ambonia for to do?"

"I'll tell you. First of all, I have promised Mole a Limbi pie, and I mean to put little Isaac inside. There is the crust. It's quite big enough, and I'll bore holes for air."

"You not hurt him. Bless um little heart," said Ambonia, with motherly affection in her eyes.

"Not I. I wouldn't hurt a hair of his wool for the world."

"And what I to do?"

"You must come in after dinner, dressed as I tell you. A thick veil will hide your face, and the dodge will be for you to tell Mr. Mole's fortune."

"Tell um his fortune?"

"Yes, I shall introduce you as the great fetish from the East. He will ask if his wife is alive, if he will get into parliament, and if he will be governor of Limbi."

"Governor of Limbi?" she repeated.

"That's the latest idea," answered Jack. "Monday has sold him the kingdom, which he means to give to our queen, if the prime minister will make him governor."

"He got one governor himself, already," replied Ambonia, pointing to herself with a smile.

"Quite right too. I wouldn't give a rap for a woman who couldn't well manage her husband."

"Me do."

"Keep him down Amby, my dear," replied Jack, jovially; "trample on him, sit on him and pull his hairs, and claw him with the marks of the ten commandments."

"Me do all that," continued Ambonia, looking pleased at Jack's praise.

"You stop here till Monday comes for you. I'll coach you up," said Jack; "and now, what will you have? You must be tired. Shall it be a meat tea?"

"Very nice; that do well," she answered.

Jack gave Monday orders not to admit anyone, and to prepare something for Ambonia.

He went over to Harvey's rooms, and found him looking out a white tie, and his evening clothes for Mr. Mole's party.

"Such a spree, Dick," he cried.

"What is?"

"Ambonia's turned up."

"Go on," said Harvey, incredulously.

"She has, and I've got her bottled up in my room."

"Hurroosh!" cried Harvey. "You'll plant her on Mole, I suppose."

"Rather."

"What is the game?"

"I want you to help me to draw up a little handbill to be printed immediately, because Mole must engage her to come to his house after the banquet."

"A what?" asked Harvey.

"This is my idea," said Jack, taking a pen and a sheet of paper.

"The Pythian Priestess rends aside the veil of the future."

"Veil of the future is good, so is Pythian," answered Harvey.

"And," continued Jack, "initiates the neophyte into the secrets of time. Will that do?"

"Stunning."

"The P. P. is from the far and mystic East, and her wonderful abracadabra has——"

"What's that?" demanded Harvey.

"Blest if I know; an Arabian charm, I think. It's some thing to do with magic."

"All right; cut along."

"Has," continued Jack, "been pronounced by all the crowned heads of Europe, the modern Delphic oracle."

"Put an N. B.," said Harvey. "Say the Pythian Priestess backs herself to lick table-turning, commonplace gipsy fortune-telling, and all similar rot into a cocked hat."

"That would be too slangy," cried Jack, "wouldn't it? We will add—Moderate terms for private parties; and now I'll go and get this printed, and make Mole engage the priestess."

"Is that all? Can't we do anything else?"

"You're growing wicked, Dick."

"I've been laid up for some months, and I want a little amusement."

"Well, I've got a Limbi pie—*Paté de Limbi*—for old Mole."

"What does that mean?"

"It means a great big pie-crust, with a little Mole inside it. Don't it remind you of the nursery rhyme?" said Jack.

"Which one? There are so many of them. 'Let dogs delight?'"

"No. 'Sing a song of sixpence;' something about 'four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie.'"

"Oh, I know—

"It's a dish to set before a king;
The queen was in the parlour,
Eating bread and honey;
The king was in his counting-house,
Counting out his money——"

That's it. Cut off to the printer's, old man. What time does Mole put on the feed?"

"Eight, sharp."

"I'll be there."

"Not a word about Ambonia," said Jack, warningly.

"Do you take me for a kid?" answered Harvey.

Jack went to the printer's had the bill struck off, and took it to Mr. Mole, who unhesitatingly engaged the Pythian Priestess for the evening at the moderate remuneration of one sovereign.

"She will cause some excitement, and more amusement. Let her come, Harkaway," remarked Mr. Mole.

"All right, sir."

"Are you off?"

"I must go home and dress. White choker, and all that."

"Don't forget the *Paté de Limbi* you promised me, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole.

"No, sir, I won't. It shall be a dish to set before a king," answered Jack.

"I mean to make it a great feature of the evening, and make a speech over it, see if I don't. I have practised in private, and am becoming quite an orator."

"Good-bye, sir. *Sans adieu*," answered Jack.

He hurried back to his room, where Ambonia, having just finished a big tea, was talking to Monday, and playing contentedly with the children.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

MR. MOLE'S PARTY.

MRS. BIMMS, who was once more Mr. Mole's house-keeper, did her utmost to do honour to her master's guests.

She was delighted at being reinstalled in her old place.

All the best china and plate were brought into use, and the table in the dining-room looked magnificent.

At seven o'clock the gentlemen who were invited began to arrive, and were amiably received by Mr. Mole.

They separated into little groups, after the manner of university men, who always form themselves into sets.

Some talked boating, others cricket, others fishing, and football, and there were those who held sweet counsel as to the coming examinations.

Both Harkaway and Harvey had passed their "little go," as the first examination is called.

Owing to Harvey's recent illness, he had been thrown back, and could not go in until the following year for "greats," or his B. A.

Jack, however, thought himself well prepared for the trial of his classical knowledge and general attainments.

He had really worked very hard.

When we consider that during his travels abroad his studies had been interrupted, it will be easily understood that he had a great deal of ground to make up.

Franklin, the reading man, of whom we have before spoken, gave him assistance, and his tutors all thought he stood a good chance.

"Who'll be at the head of the list next month?"

"Oh, Franklin or Harkaway," was the reply.

At length, when all were assembled, and eight o'clock had struck, Mr. Mole said—

"Gentlemen, it is my very pleasing duty to inform you that supper awaits us. I can not ask you to take in the ladies."

"'Cos why?" asked a rather rude man, who was immediately forgiven when it was known that he belonged to Keble College.

"Because, my esteemed but ungrammatical friend, there are none," answered Mr. Mole.

There was a laugh at this retort.

"Therefore," continued Mr. Mole, "as the happy founder of this humble feast, I will ask you to kindly crowd in as best you can."

"Well," exclaimed Sir Sydney Dawson, "as I'm rather sharp set, I'll crowd in first, and let the deuce take the hindmost."

Most of the guests invited had accepted the invitation, and there were nearly fifty assembled around the hospitable board.

Full justice was done to the good things provided, and the wines were as excellent and as well appreciated as the provisions.

When the time had arrived, Mr. Mole rose.

"Hear! hear!" said Harkaway, knocking with his knife on the table.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Mole, "hitherto I have been unaccustomed to public speaking."

"Never too late to mend," said Sir Sydney Dawson.

"Now it becomes almost an obligation to me," continued Mr. Mole. "It can not be a secret to you that I am about to contest Oxford at the election in the Liberal interest."

There was a howl of derision.

"Yes, gentlemen, I am the Liberal candidate."

Derisive laughter followed the howl.

"But, gentlemen, as you are not electors, I will not inflict my eloquence——"

"Query !" from Sir Sydney.

"Eloquence, I say, upon you. I will simply call your kind attention to a famous pie, which is made from a famous recipe, given by the chief cook to the king of Limbi."

"Where's that ?" asked an irreverent gownsman.

"China Seas," answered another.

"Allow me, my youthful enthusiast," said Mr. Mole, "to correct your geography ; Limbi is not in the China Seas. It is in the Malay Archipelago, and as I have been there I ought to know."

"Hear, hear !" exclaimed Jack.

"Very much hear, hear !" said Sir Sydney Dawson.

"This *Paté de Limbi* is a magnificent dish, and you will all, I hope, agree with me that——"

"This is useful knowledge," said Harvey.

"No interruptions, if you please," replied Mr. Mole, angrily. "The Limbi pie is a dish for a king. Taste it first, and chaff it afterwards ; is that fair or is it not ?"

No one made any reply.

"Monday," said Mr. Mole.

"Sare," replied the black.

"Bring in this masterpiece of your countrymen's art. Bring in the *Paté de Limbi*."

"Coming, sare," answered Monday, with difficulty concealing a grin.

Expectation was on tiptoe.

Every man wondered what on earth this extraordinary pie was like.

"Made of babies, I'll bet," whispered Sir Sydney, to his immediate neighbour.

The neighbour at this announcement, which was given with an air of authority, was taken ill, and retired in a hurry to an adjoining apartment.

The pie, which was as much as Monday could carry conveniently, was placed upon the table.

Mr. Mole looked at it curiously.

Harkaway sat on his right hand, and he said to him—

“How do you carve it? I am not an engineer, and don’t know how to cut through mountains.”

“You don’t cut it at all, sir,” replied Jack.

“What then?”

“The lid lifts off, and you spoon it out.”

“Oh, I see. Monday, plates.”

Mr. Mole took up a large spoon, and with the other hand lifted off the lid.

“Now, gentlemen,” he exclaimed, “I will make you acquainted with the taste of this eastern delicacy.”

All eyes were fixed upon him.

Suddenly, as the lid was removed, and the spoon inserted, the little Mole sprang up.

To keep him quiet, Jack had half filled the pie with treacle, which the child had been industriously sucking up.

He was covered with the sticky stuff from head to foot.

Without meaning it, Mr. Mole had hit his tender offspring in the eye with the big spoon.

Isaac had some of his mother’s temper in him.

Uttering a howl of rage, he sprang upon his father, and putting his treachery arms around his neck, bit his ear sharply.

“Oh, Lord save us!” cried Mr. Mole. “What is this? Help, help! take the little demon off, somebody.”

Loud were the shouts of laughter which arose on every side.

The position of Mr. Mole was comic in the extreme.

The louder he shouted, the closer clung the child to him, besmearing him with treacle, and biting his left ear.

“Oh, the brute, he is biting my ear off, drat him!” cried Mr. Mole, furiously.

No one seemed disposed to come to his assistance.

Rising from his chair, Mole seized the child with both hands, and forced him back into the pie.

No sooner had he done so than the boy bobbed up again.

Mole put the lid on.

The little Isaac forced it up, like a sprite in a pantomime.

Getting on a chair, Mole sat on the lid, his feet resting on the table.

"Harkaway," he exclaimed, looking severely at Jack, "this is one of your tricks."

"No, sir; the little beggar must have eaten his way into the pie."

"Get off," cried Sir Sydney, "you'll smother the child. Shame! shame!"

"Shame, shame! Beastly chouse!" echoed several men, still laughing heartily.

"What am I to do?" asked Mole, looking blankly around him.

"Get off! Off!" cried the men.

"Am I to have my left ear gnawed down to a grizzly stump?" demanded Mr. Mole.

Jack threw his voice into the interior of the pie.

Imitating a half choked child, he exclaimed—

"Oh, papa, me want get out; me stiffe. Get um out, please, papa."

A Worcester man, who was endowed with fine sentiments, was outraged with the horrible turn affairs seemed to be taking.

"Get off, you sir!" he exclaimed. "You are a disgrace to humanity!"

A dish of potatoes was near him.

Taking one up, hot and steaming, he threw it at Mr. Mole.

"Oh, my ear! He's bunged up my earhole!" cried the wretched Mole.

"Serve you right," said a Brasenose man, favouring him with a brace of potatoes.

"I don't like to be left out in the cold," said Sir Sydney, and he too took to throwing potatoes.

The example was contagious.

"It's a breach of hospitality," remarked O'Rafferty. "But, bedad, he'll kill the child, and I'll chuck a murphy."

A shower of potatoes fell upon Mr. Mole.

He tottered on his seat.

He fell.

But rising again directly, he took the pie in his arms, and rushed into the passage with it.

Here he encountered Mrs. Bimms.

"Whatever is the matter, sir?" she asked.

Mr. Mole glanced at her for a moment, not having breath enough to make any reply.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

WHEN he recovered himself, he said, pantingly—

"Take this wretched child, bathe him, and put him to bed."

"Child, sir? Are you mad? I see no child," replied Mrs. Bimms.

"He is in this pie."

"In the pie? Oh, Lord!"

Mr. Mole set the *Païé de Limbi* down on the floor of the hall, and the little Mole jumped out.

"Well, I never did!" exclaimed Mrs. Bimms. "Who's been and done this?"

"It's a trick," said Mr. Mole.

"Oh, those Oxford gentlemen! What will they do next?"

"They'd bring my wife back if they could," replied Mr. Mole; "but that, thank goodness, is out of their power; she is gone."

"And a good job too, sir. If I was to see that black creature again, I do think I should be tempted to hang her."

"It would be a toss up between you, but I think I'd back Ambonia," answered Mr. Mole, with a ghastly smile.

"Let us hope that we shall never meet," said Mrs. Bimms, solemnly. "I love my kind, but I can't abear the heathen vixens."

"Don't talk, woman; secure the child, and get me some hot water. I'm as sticky as a burr with treacle, and I do believe that half my left ear's gone," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

Mrs. Bimms was recalled to herself.

She took the child away, and put him to bed, administering many a slap on the way because he kicked, and raved, and bit so abominably.

Hot water and a towel put Mr. Mole all right again. He rejoined his guests.

Jack had meanwhile explained the joke, and when it was understood that the little "nigger boy" was not hurt, the excitement calmed down.

The supper proceeded.

Monday and the waiters cleared the table, upon which wine and spirits were placed, as well as cigars.

Everyone began to enjoy themselves.

Mr. Mole whispered to Jack—

"When shall we have the Pythian Priestess in? I am anxious to consult her."

"When you like, sir," replied Jack.

"I will ask the company."

Mr. Mole rose.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "I have engaged, at a great expense, a wonderful lady, who can, as she asserts, peep into the future."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack.

"Can your priestess tell who is going to win the University Boat Race this year, Oxford or Cambridge?" asked Carden, whose mind was nothing if it did not run on boating.

"Perhaps; let us see. Harkaway, be good enough to hand round the circulars of the Pythian Priestess, and kindly tell Monday to request her attendance at once. We will soon prove whether she is an impostor or not."

Mr. Mole smiled blandly.

"I will myself question her first," he continued.

"Bravo!" said Harvey.

"There are a few questions which I wish to put to her, and as I wish to act fairly and above board, I will tell you, gentlemen, what they are.

"First. Shall I be returned as member for Oxford?

"Second. Shall I become governor of the important province of Limbi?

"Third. Is my wife Ambonia—wretched creature!—alive?

"After this, any gentleman who likes may interrogate the oracle."

Mr. Mole sat down amidst a buzz of approval.

"Here comes the Pythian Priestess, sir," said Jack.

"Let her be seated," answered Mole.

Jack put himself by the side of Ambonia, and guided her to a chair.

She was clad in a mystical sort of costume, which Jack had obtained from a shop where theatrical dresses were sold.

The skirt was of white muslin, ornamented with death's heads, snakes, birds, and curious fishes.

A long thick veil concealed her face, and no one could have recognised her.

"The priestess is seated, sir," replied Jack, as Ambonia took a chair at the further end of the room.

Whispering in her ear, he added—

"Don't forget what I told you."

She inclined her head.

"Now," said Mr. Mole, "I will rush upon my fate."

He advanced to the priestess.

"You must kneel! sir," said Jack.

"Kneel!" repeated Mr. Mole.

"Yes. She will not answer any questions unless you do."

"But this seems rather undignified."

"The Khan of Turkey, and the Great Mogul, and the Shah of Persia, and the Tycoon of Japan, and the——"

"Stop, stop!" cried Mr. Mole. "If all these illustrious personages did it, I suppose I must."

He knelt down before Ambonia.

"Let me put the questions," said Jack, who cleared his throat and added—

"Will this gentleman be elected for Oxford?"

"No," answered Ambonia.

"Will he be governor of Limbi?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Is his wife alive?"

"She is," answered Ambonia.

Mr. Mole rose, and looked around him very uneasily.

"A very remarkable woman, if she only speaks the truth," he remarked.

"Always correct, sir," answered Jack.

The guests all seemed inclined to take their turn at the oracle.

"One moment," continued Mr. Mole. "Ask her where my wife is now."

"Where is Mrs. Mole at this particular instant?" said Jack.

"Here!" cried Ambonia, throwing off her veil and standing before her husband.

Mr. Mole's legs shook under him.

He turned green, and his eyes seemed to start from his head.

"Jockeyed again," remarked Sir Sydney.

"You not please see me?" asked Ambonia, sternly.

Mr. Mole turned upon Jack savagely.

"This is another of your confounded tricks!" he exclaimed. "But I'll wring your nose."

He made a rush at Jack.

Ambonia stepped between them.

"If anybody's nose wring, it is yours," she said, "not Jack. He my friend. Come 'long. I show you who wring nose."

She seized him by the nasal organ, and dragged him round the room, to the infinite delight of the spectators.

He kicked and struggled, but all to no good.

At last she let him go.

"Oh, my poor nose! it's half wrung off! Oh, you beast! you black fiend! to come and disgrace me before my friends! I shall be the laughing stock of Oxford!" groaned Mr. Mole.

Unable to face his guests, burning with rage, and smarting with pain, he ran from the room and hid himself in the coke cupboard.

Here he remained concealed till all was still.

Looking at the university men, she exclaimed—

"You go out. You all go. What for you come and upset my house, and make feast? I break head if not go! Be off, will you? All 'cept Jack. He my friend."

Alarmed at her furious manner, the men took up their caps, and started off helter-skelter.

They all agreed that Mr. and Mrs. Mole were good fun.

In spite of the exception made in his favour, Jack determined to clear out also.

When Ambonia was alone, she hunted for Mr. Mole, but without success.

One child she found in the bed.

The other, which she had left in the hall, was missing.

"Where um baby?" she said to herself.

All at once she heard cries, mingled with the sounds of smart slaps.

"Back again, are you, you varmint? I'll warm your black skin, I will." Slap, slap. "Where's your precious beast of a mother, eh?" Slap. "I'll give you something for supper, you little Hottentot." Slap, slap, slap.

Ambonia flew up the stairs like an enraged tigress.

"It that woman, Bimms!" she muttered. "Mole got her back again. How he dare do that?"

She entered the room from whence the cries proceeded, and beheld her darling stretched across Mrs. Bimms's lap.

The right hand of Mrs. Bimms descended with frequent force upon the child.

Dismal yells came from the sufferer.

Ambonia rushed upon Mrs. Bimms, whom she overturned by a well-directed blow.

The housekeeper fell on her face.

Taking off her shoe, Ambonia held her down with one hand, and inflicted upon her the same humiliating punishment which she had meted out to the young Limbian.

"How you like it, English white cat?" she screamed. "I make your skin hot. Why for you beat my poor child?"

The unhappy Bimms writhed and twisted in vain.

There was no escape from the firm grasp and the cruel blows.

Her cries were fearful.

At last Ambonia left off because her arm ached, and she was exhausted.

She allowed Mrs. Bimms to get up, trembling with rage, and purple with pain.

"You black brute!" she screamed. "I'll summons you, I will."

"Go, show your beats," answered Ambonia, derisively; adding, "get out my husband's house. Be off. I have no white snakes here. Go, or I——"

She clenched her fist, and looked so like the old gentleman himself, as Mrs. Bimms afterwards said, that the wretched housekeeper ran as if possessed.

Descending the stairs, she flew out of the front door, and tore down the street, not stopping till she reached her friend's domicile, and fell fainting on the threshold.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE MASKED BALL.

AGAIN poor Mr. Mole resigned himself to his fate.

Submitting himself to petticoat government, as many a better man has done before and since, he pretended to be glad of his wife's return, kissed the children, and went on with the business of his election.

The day fixed for the masked ball at the theatre drew near.

Sir Sydney Dawson and Jack had agreed to go together.

Jack, who had a good voice, thought of going as a troubadour or minstrel, but he gave up the idea and hired the dress of Mephistopheles.

This consisted of two horns, a tight-fitting red suit with a long tail, cloven feet and a pitchfork.

He looked a very gentlemanly sort of devil, and was rather terrible in his black mask.

Sir Sydney attired himself as a bear, and made up very well.

They dressed themselves at the costumer's and went in a fly to the theatre.

It was eleven o'clock when they arrived.

The house was crowded with fantastic-looking people, attired in the costumes of all nations, and representing every profession and celebrated character.

The whole of the pit had been boarded over for dancing, and the merry strains of the orchestra made many feet go trippingly round in the mazy whirl of the waltz or the wild impetuous galop.

Everybody being masked, it was almost impossible to tell who the masqueraders were.

The voices alone betrayed people to each other.

Sir Sydney and Jack had made up their quarrel about the pretty shop-girl.

Jack had asked him as a favour to give her up and let Monday see if he could gain her hand.

This the baronet had promised to do.

"I will meet her to-night at the ball," he had said, "and that shall be the last time."

Jack was satisfied, but he did not know what a selfish libertine Sir Sydney was in his heart.

He had made a promise which he never intended to keep.

La Favorita was enchanted at the idea of going to a ball.

She had told Sir Sydney he would know her by being dressed as a nun, with a white ivory cross hanging by her side.

Monday had obtained Jack's permission to go as a Limbian chief, armed with spear and axe.

When Sir Sydney and Jack entered the theatre, a dance had just concluded.

Henry the Eighth pushed rather rudely against Jack, who gave him a whack on the head with his pitchfork.

"Hullo, who's cracking my nob?" said a voice.

Jack instantly recognised Harvey.

"So, Master Dick," he whispered, "you said you shouldn't go. I'll tell Hilda."

Harvey look around in astonishment, but Jack glided away in the throng.

Sir Sydney walked up to a pretty girl dressed as a columbine.

"Buy me an orange, Mr. Bear," she said.

The bear immediately put his paws round her and gave her a good hug.

"Oh, please don't, Mr. Bear," said the little woman out of breath; "you make my stays run into me."

"Aren't you a little duck?" said Sir Sydney. "Come along, and you shall have as many as you like."

"What a nice bear you are?" she answered, taking his arm. "I'd no idea bears were so kind."

"It's a way we've got in our family," said Dawson, leading her to the refreshment bar.

Jack meanwhile wandered about, hitting and prodding people right and left with his pitchfork.

No one lost his temper, for a masked ball is an occasion of license, and people are allowed to do pretty well as they like.

A masker dressed as a jester or fool, with cap and bells and a bladder filled with air, tied by a string to a long stick, attracted Jack's notice, and he gave him a prod.

Instantly the fool let fly at him with his bladder

Bang, flap, flap, bang, boom! went the bladder about Jack's head.

In vain he probed with his pitchfork, he could not keep off the shower of blows.

Each one made a loud hollow noise, and the crowd laughed immoderately at the fight between a fool and the fiend.

At last a lucky thrust from Jack caught the bladder, and pricked a hole in it.

With a loud report it dried up, and only a bit of useless string hung to the stick.

"I'm done for," said the fool, in a melancholy voice. "I'm not a match for a she-devil, and I might have known he would be too much for me."

Jack glided to the mask's side.

"Mr. Mole, I'll tell your wife," he whispered.

"You know me! Who are you?" gasped the fool.

"No matter. You are found out, and Ambonia shall know."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear good worthy sir, forbear," said Mr. Mole. "I have slipped away on pretence of addressing a meeting of electors. Do not make my house miserable."

"Sir," replied Jack, "you are a disgrace to your sex. It is such men as you who make bad wives."

"This language to me," cried Mole angrily. "Who are you, sir, who dare to speak in such a manner?"

"You have chosen a proper costume; motley is the only wear for an old fool like you," cried Jack, who had all along disguised his voice.

"I will know who you are!" cried Mole furiously.

He made a dash at Jack, and tore off his mask before he could get out of the way.

This was contrary to all etiquette.

"Harkaway!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Jack. "Give me back my mask, bother you. Quick! I don't want to be recognised, you confounded ass. If it had been anybody else, so help me goodness, I'd have knocked him down! You deserve a flogger."

Mole saw that he was seriously annoyed, and gave him the mask, which he hastily put on again.

Short as the time had been during which his face was

exposed to view, there were several in the crowd who remarked his features.

This had an important result, as will be seen presently.

"I apologise. It shan't occur again," said Mole.

"I'll be hanged if it does!" replied Jack. "You lose all the fun if people know who you are, and how you're dressed."

"You chaffed me, you must admit that."

"It was only fun."

"You won't tell Ambonia?" said Mole.

"Not I," replied Jack, who, however, intended to send a messenger up to his house directly with a note, informing Ambonia that her husband was at the ball, dressed as a jester.

"She doesn't know I'm here, that's the beauty of it, and I intend to have a spree."

"Quite right, sir," Jack answered, recovering his good temper.

"It's a poor beast that never rejoices."

"Right you are. Stand a liquor?"

"A good idea, Harkaway; I want a liquor. Mine is a constitution that requires a little stimulating occasionally. What do you say to a bottle of fiz? I wish you had not made a hole in my bladder though."

Mr. Mole looked ruefully at the stick.

"Bust up!" remarked Jack.

"You punctured it, and it collapsed."

"Which in plain English means," said Jack, "that I picked it and it went squash."

They walked to the bar and ordered some champagne, which they drank.

Then Jack wished him good-bye for the present, and saying, "Stroll on, sir," sought another part of the room.

In a corner he saw a bear with a nun.

"Dawson and Ada," he muttered. "I'll pipe them off, if they don't twig me."

Getting into the shadow, he listened to their conversation, wishing, for Monday's sake, to know what Sir Sydney's intentions really were.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE MYSTERIOUS MASK.

At any other time Jack would have disdained to watch them, and listen to what they were saying.

But under the circumstances he did not see any harm in it, as his intentions were good.

The end excused the means.

La Favorita spoke first.

"Oh, Sydney," she said, "I would do any thing for you, but I cannot leave my situation and go right away."

"Why not?" asked Dawson. "I only want you to go to Abingdon, my Favorita. There you will have lodgings, and I will visit you."

"Will you marry me first?"

"No; I cannot promise that; but I will afterwards."

"Do not urge me further," she said, tearfully. "You have made me love you, and that is misery enough. I feel I ought to break off our connection before worse comes."

"You little silly thing," he replied, looking at her affectionately. "Why cannot you trust me?"

"I could marry one who really loves me."

"Who is it? Oh! I know who you mean. Harkaway's black servant; well, you must have a nice taste, I'm sure," he replied, sarcastically.

"He is a king and idolizes me," replied Ada.

"My dear child," replied Sir Sydney, with a sneer, "I am very sorry I did not know sooner, that you preferred men of colour."

"I don't prefer them," she said, firmly. "But I must say, that I would rather be the wife of King Matabella or Monday, as you call him, than—than——"

She hesitated, and then burst into tears.

"You don't know your own mind, my pet," replied Sir Sydney, more kindly. "You will go to Abingdon tomorrow with me, and then if, after a week's reflection, you want to come back to your black prince, you shall. Hark! the band is playing a quadrille. Will you dance?"

He exercised a strange fascination over her.

Smiling through her tears, she looked up lovingly in his face and consented.

He led her away in triumph, and Jack feared that from that moment she was lost.

"Poor thing!" he said to himself. "Dawson is a villain. I can do nothing for her now, but I will try to see her in the morning. It is a cruel shame that men should be so heartless. Poor child! perhaps she has a father and mother whose hearts would be broken if she brought shame into their house."

He was about to turn round, when a tall woman, dressed as a Spanish grandee's wife, faced him.

"Pardon me," she said, in a low voice. "I very nearly trod on your tail. Really, devils should be more careful. Why do you not carry your tail over your arm?"

"Thank you," replied Jack, "I was thinking of something else for the moment."

"Of Sir Sydney Dawson, and the Favorita, I presume?" returned the lady.

Jack started.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Oh, I know every thing, even your name, Mr. Harkaway," answered the splendidly-dressed Spaniard.

"By Jove!" said Jack. "Who are you?"

"It is impertinent to ask questions, but I will tell you that I am dreadfully mysterious. Later in the evening you may know more; at present, I am not in a talkative mood."

"Rare thing for a woman," said Jack.

"Thank you; rather smart that. Poor Favorita, we were speaking of her just now. Don't you think your sex very heartless, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Some of them."

"Ah! of course. You belong to the virtuous set. Well, the fair Emily is lucky; still, I am sorry for that poor child in the nun's dress."

"Who the deuce can she be?" thought Jack. "She knows every thing. I'll never leave her till I find out. Can she be Hilda? No. It's not her voice, and she is rather taller. By George, I'm puzzled."

"Now I must leave you," said the mask. "We shall meet again later in the evening."

"I can not let you go like this," repeated Jack, whose curiosity was piqued.

"How can you detain me?"

"Only by persuasion. You will take a glass of wine with me, or honour me with your hand for a dance."

"Thank you ; I have been dancing," answered the mask, with a slight air of fatigue, which Jack was not slow to notice.

"You must be tired," he exclaimed. "There is a little room at the back of the buffet, where we can sit down. Take my arm."

"I am afraid you will have a very bad opinion of me for yielding so easily to your wishes," replied the mask, putting herself by his side.

"Oh, no. At a ball like this, everybody does as they like."

"Wouldn't Emily be jealous?"

"What the eye can't see, the heart does not grieve for," replied Jack, with a smile.

"Ah ! you men, you men !" exclaimed the mask, flirting her fan ; "you are all alike. Men were deceivers ever."

"Do you know what the French say?"

"They say so many things ; their morality is so strange. Tell me what it is."

"When one has not the one whom one loves, one must love the one that one has."

"Then you mean to imply that you love me, whose face you have not seen."

"I am interested in you," said Jack, handing her to a seat in front of a little table.

The room was not full, containing only a dozen people, the others being engaged in dancing and frolicking in the ballroom.

"Waiter !" exclaimed Jack, "a bottle of champagne."

The wine was placed before them, and Jack drank to his fair companion.

"Will you not remove your mask ? It is so hot and close," said Jack.

The dark, flashing eyes looked tantalizingly at him through the holes in the domino.

A faint smile curled round the corners of the mouth, which was just visible through the fringe which hung round the edge of the mask.

"Thank you ; I prefer to keep myself unknown," she answered.

"At least, tell me your name, or give me an appointment, where I can meet you to-morrow."

"Impossible," replied the mask. "If my friends were to knowt hat I was here, I should never be forgiven. Sir! is not that someone you know looking at you?"

Jack turned his head, and saw a savage-looking chief at his elbow.

"Monday!" he exclaimed.

The black made no answer ; he had his eyes fixed intently upon the mask.

Suddenly he pointed his spear at her, and made a thrust with it in her side.

The shock, without actually hurting the lady, caused her to fall from her chair.

The glasses shook on the table.

Monday ran to prevent them falling, but as he did so, very quickly changed their position.

So, without either of them knowing it, Harkaway's glass was before the fair unknown, and hers before him.

Jack rushed to the mask's assistance, and raising her up, placed her on her chair again.

Then, turning fiercely to Monday, he demanded angrily what he meant by such ruffianly conduct.

CHAPTER LXXX.

BEHIND THE MASK.

MONDAY hastened to put his master in a good temper.

"Me see everyone else poke fun, sare," he replied.

"Why should you take the liberty of doing such a thing to a lady?" answered Jack.

"Give poke with debble's pitchfork, sare ; me sorry upset the lady."

"Well, be off about your business. I meant to have sent you up to Mole's house to tell Ambonia to come down, but you have annoyed me, and I'm not in the humour now. Cut along and get out of my sight."

Monday retired, though he did not leave the room. He

hid himself behind a screen from which he could watch the mask and his master.

"Me just in time there," he muttered.

The mask said to Jack—

"You must forgive him. He only availed himself of the license of the evening."

"Hang his impudence!" replied Jack.

"Think no more of it; I am not hurt. You don't drink your wine; I will pledge you."

They raised their glasses, and emptied them at a draught.

The mask shuddered.

"You tremble," said Jack, anxiously; "are you cold?"

"No. It was a strange feeling; do not people say, that when you shiver like that, without a cause, someone is walking over your grave?"

"I have heard so."

"I will walk about," continued the mask.

"Say that you will have supper with me," said Jack, who was mad at the thought that he should be unable to discover who his fair companion was.

"Very well, at two o'clock I will meet you here," replied the mask, with an encouraging smile.

"And after supper you will unmask?"

"Yes."

Jack fancied he saw the corners of her mouth twitch and quiver as if with an internal spasm.

She pressed his hand, and glided away like a fairy spirit.

Lingering a moment behind, Jack got up, and also prepared to join the gay and noisy throng on the stage.

The fun was growing fast and furious.

Mr. Mole had been drinking with everybody and was very much screwed.

Jack found him perched on the edge of a private box, holding his mask in one hand, and waving the other to an admiring crowd.

He thought he was addressing the electors.

"Free and independent electors of the city of Oxshford," he cried; "vote for Mole, the candidate of the peoplesh, and return him triumphantly at the head of the pollsh."

"Hear, hear!" cried Jack.

"This is the time when people should rise in their might, and shweep away the last remnantsh of aristocratish abushes."

"Down with the Radical!" cried a man.

"Don't throw oranges at him," said Jack.

The hint was immediately taken, as he meant it should be, and a volley of oranges flew at the ambitious Mole.

"Gentlemansh call me a Radicalsh," said Mole.

"What's a Radicalsh? Anshwer me that."

He looked round him with drunken gravity.

An orange struck him in the eye.

"Orangesh in the eye," he muttered; "come to rotton eggsh next and cabbage stalksh. Better slopesh."

Another volley striking him on various parts of the head, he fell backwards, and lay very contentedly at the bottom of the box.

"Vote for Molesh," he said, childishly, "vote for Molesh, that's the ticketsh. Hurrah for Moles! I can do it."

Then he went off in a sound slumber, and snored like a pig in the sun.

Much amused, Jack strolled on, and at last was stopped by a dense crowd.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Lady fainted, I think," was the reply.

Something struck Jack that the lady in question was his fair unknown.

She had shown symptoms of uneasiness, if not pain, just before leaving him.

By dint of pushing and considerable exertion, he got through the throng.

"Give her air," said someone.

Instantly four maskers took up a pallid form and carried it into a corridor, in which was a free current of cool air.

It was as Jack had surmised, the Spanish lady who was dressed with so much magnificence, and had roused his curiosity to such a pitch.

He came up just in time to see her mask raised from the face in order that some water might be thrown upon it.

The face was convulsed with agony, the limbs con-

torted and twitching in convulsive spasms, and deep groans broke from the livid lips.

Jack started back in horror. It was not a woman's face at all, but a man's. Moustache, whiskers and beard had all been carefully shaved off to give it a feminine appearance.

But still the features were too well-known to Jack for him to mistake them for an instant.

The man, disguised as a woman, and now lying before him, surrounded by a gaping, curious crowd, was Kemp.

There could be no doubt of this.

What his object in going to the ball dressed as a Spanish lady could be was at present a mystery.

There was some horrible secret in his sufferings which was awful to witness.

"A doctor. Send for a doctor," cried a man becoming alarmed.

"I am a physician," said a gentleman dressed as a Cossack, throwing aside his mask.

He knelt by the side of Kemp and made an examination.

"He is dying," he exclaimed solemnly.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Jack.

"He has all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning."

At the sound of Jack's voice Kemp opened his glassy eyes.

A horrible contraction passed over his features.

He tried to speak, and his lips moved.

He beat the air feebly with his hands.

Jack knelt at his side, and, bending down, put his ear to his lips.

"I am dying. O God, how I suffer! I have met the fate I intended for you; how I know not. You are noble and good. Forgive a poor wretch who in his last moments asks you to pray for him. There should be no anger in the grave. Pray for me. Pray for me."

These words were gasped out painfully one after the other, by Kemp.

"I forgive you, freely," said Jack, "and will pray silently to Heaven to pardon you all your sins."

Kemp looked pleased.

He clutched Jack's hand in a convulsive grasp.

The death-rattle was heard in his throat.

His limbs jerked spasmodically.

And then all was over.

"Death is here," said the surgeon. "Back, all of you. Clear the place and send to the police-station for a stretcher. Back, I say. The mask is removed for ever."

Quickly the horrified, startled crowd fell back and sought the ball-room, from whence the strains of music proceeded as if nothing had happened.

Why should sudden death stay the proceedings of the night and spoil the enjoyment of the maskers?

No one knew who the victim was, except Jack; and what did they care because there was one atom less in the vast aggregate of humanity?

With difficulty Harkaway removed his hand from the rigid death-grasp of Kemp.

He too stole away silently, leaving the doctor and some of the attendants of the theatre in charge of the corpse.

It seemed so strange to speak of one who was just before in the full enjoyment of health and spirits as the corpse.

But so it was.

Kemp, like Davis, had run his brief career, affording one more illustration of the fact that virtue, in the long run, will usually triumph over vice.

Harkaway had another of his enemies wiped off the slate of life with the sponge of death.

Only Hunston now remained to worry him, and he was a fugitive from justice.

The police were actively searching for him, and there was a price set upon his head.

Still, as Jack rejoined the merry throng of maskers, he puzzled his brain to think how Kemp had come to his sad and awful end.

Spying Monday at the end of the room, he went up to him.

Perhaps the black could throw some light upon the mystery.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE ELECTION.

"MAST' JACK, um look for you," said Monday.

"What for?" asked Jack.

"Who that lady um got with you?"

"There is a mystery about that which I will explain presently, but why do you want to know?"

"Can't tell, sare, whether um do right or wrong, but when give um poke, did it for good reason."

"I rather thought so at the time, though I couldn't make out what your little game was," replied Jack.

"Um see the lady put something in um glass, and Monday think of Buster and the p'ison."

"Yes, go on," said Jack, much interested.

"Um give poke to get at glasses, and um change your glass and put it before the lady."

"By Jove, Monday, old fellow," cried Jack, grasping his hand warmly, "you have saved my life again."

"Was it um p'ison in the glass, sare?"

"It was a deadly poison called arsenic, which causes the utmost pain to those who take it."

"Why the lady want p'ison you, sare?"

"It wasn't a lady at all. It was Mr. Kemp," replied Jack.

"Mist' Kemp dress up like gal?"

"Yes."

"Well, he drunk um arsenic, anyhow."

"Yes, that he did, sure enough."

"Him got um bellum ache, sare, what you say, stomach grubs."

"Mully grubs you mean," said Jack; "yes, poor fellow, his troubles are over. He is dead."

"Dead! Hurroosh!" cried Monday spinning round.

"'Nother of um gone now, sare."

"You are right; there is only Hunston left, and I don't fear him much, now Davis and Kemp are removed."

"Why for you pity um rascals, sare?"

"I can afford to pity them now they are gone."

"When in Limbi, sare, um kill um Pisangs no one feel sorry. We make feast and do war-dance."

"Ah, but in England, Monday, we are Christians, and our religion, as you ought to know by this time, tells us to forgive our enemies and those who spitefully use us," said Jack.

"Very funny thing that," said Monday shaking his head. "But suppose it all right since you say so, sare."

Feeling sad and low-spirited, Jack did not care to remain any longer at the ball.

He went away, changed his dress, and reached his rooms safely without being proctorised.

The remainder of the week passed without any event of importance.

An inquest was held upon Kemp, who was supposed to have committed suicide.

It was revealed that the police wanted him for various things, amongst others, the bank robbery, and his supposed connection with the once famous Black Band.

His distress of mind and nervous apprehensions were held sufficient cause for the rash act.

Jack said nothing.

It was not necessary for him to reveal his private affairs to everybody, and as the man was dead, he let him be buried without any further scandal.

After this, all Oxford was in a state of excitement owing to the election.

There were three candidates.

The Honourable Adolphus Tremaine, Tory; Mr. Pentarvon, Liberal; and Mr. Isaac Mole, Radical.

The good people of the worthy city of Oxford laughed at Mr. Mole's pretensions but he persisted in going to the poll.

Banners were carried about with "Mole for Oxford; vote for Mole; Mole the people's candidate. Plump for Mole; poll early for the friend of the people," written on them.

The nomination had been stormy.

Rotten eggs and dead dogs flew about the hustings, and Mole was very nearly smothered with a cat in a high state of putrefaction.

But the election was worse.

The Honourable Adolphus Tremaine and Mr. Mole not

having gained a show of hands against the Liberal Candidate, had demanded a poll.

At four o'clock, as the close of the poll drew nigh, the excitement was intense.

Knots of gownsmen, evidently looking out for a row, crowded about the Town Hall, and glared angrily at the townspeople who returned their fierce looks with interest.

At five o'clock the result of the poll was made known.

Mr. Pentarvon, Liberal, was at the head, with a large majority over the Honourable Adolphus Tremaine.

Mole appeared on the list with the miserable small number of thirty-seven votes after his name.

There was a roar of laughter amongst the crowd.

"What do you think of your university professor now?" asked a stalwart butcher of Jack, who was with his friends in the middle of the throng.

Jack's reply was to knock the butcher's hat over his eyes.

"Town, town!" cried several apprentices on witnessing this act.

"Town, town!" resounded on all sides.

"What's up!" said a bargee, taking a short pipe out of his mouth.

"A gown's bonneted a town!" was the reply.

"Wire in!" answered the bargee; "there's a score or more of me and my mates, and we're on like grub against the gowns."

"Look out, gown," roared Tom Carden, who was near enough to hear this.

"It's getting nasty," said Sir Sydney Dawson, who had hold of Harvey's arm.

"Now, gown," cried Tom Carden, again, "close in near me. Back one another up. Shoulder to shoulder; they're too many for us singly."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Harvey. "Down with the cads."

The butcher, after blundering about in a state of darkness, at length removed his hat from his face.

"Oo 'it me?" he exclaimed, purple with rage.

"I did, if you want to know," replied Jack; "at least, I knocked your hat over your eyes, which comes to the same thing."

"Then you done the worstest think as ever you did in your life," said the butcher.

"Why?" Jack ventured to ask.

"I've had my knife into you 'varsity gents this ever so long, all along of my getting a black eye from one of you at the fair, and it's nation odd if we can't have a quiet slog in at 'lection time, without no proctors and no cop-pers interfering like."

"It seems to me," remarked Sir Sydney, "that this amounts to a challenge."

"Decidedly," remarked Harvey.

"Single combat," observed Tom Carden.

"Hurroosh!" cried O'Rafferty. "This is a little bit of Donnybrook Fair, and by my faith, I shouldn't mind a go-in myself, as I'm blue mouldy for want of a bathing."

"Do you want to fight me single-handed?" asked Jack.

"That's my game," replied the butcher, who was an obstinate, pig-headed sort of fellow.

"Well, I dare say I can accommodate you."

"You're no man if you cry a go."

"Peel!" replied Jack, taking off his coat, waistcoat, and turning up his shirt-sleeves. "I'll have a rough-and-tumble for the honour of old Oxford."

"Shall I hold your things, Jack?" asked Harvey.

"If you kindly will, old fellow," replied Jack.

Harvey placed them over his arm, and the crowd fell back.

"Oh, I say," continued Jack, "just mind these two rings. I had very nearly forgotten them, and I wouldn't take a mean advantage of anyone."

He removed his rings, and gave them to Harvey, who put them on his fingers.

To fight with rings on his fingers would have been very easy.

But Jack was above doing a cowardly action.

The bargemen were rather disappointed at the prospect of a fair, stand-up, hand-to-hand fight.

They would have preferred a general row all round.

"What have we done that we should be cut out of it?" asked a pugnacious bargee.

"Don't alarm yourself," replied Carden. "You shall have your turn presently."

"You can't give me a bellyful."

"If I can't you must be a glutton for punishment," answered Tom, with a laugh.

"Come on now," said the bargee.

"Wait a bit. What's you hurry? Let my friend polish off the slaughterer first," replied Carden.

"Is yer ready?" asked the butcher, who had stripped to his shirt.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"Come on, then. A fair field and no favour. I ain't going to koo-too to any 'varsity gent. I'll give you pepper."

"It will be hot for you, my gentle pigsticker," answered Jack.

Guarding well with his right and striking out with his left, Jack, balancing himself in a springy manner on his toes, inclined his body now backwards, now forwards.

In vain the butcher tried to get within his guard.

Jack struck him on the nose, the mouth, the forehead, and the eyes, and each "gentle tap," as Carden called it, brought out a discoloured lump, or, in the language of the ring, "a mouse."

At last the butcher grew desperate, and dashing in at Jack, closed with him.

The struggle was fearful.

They rocked about like pine-trees in a storm of wind.

It was Jack's object to make his opponent fall undermost.

Cleverly putting out his left leg, he pressed his right arm over the butcher's face, and by an effort of sheer strength, forced him down.

The butcher fell like a bar of iron.

His head and back, in coming in contact with the stones, made a loud noise.

Jack rose instantly.

The butcher, however, breathed heavily, and did not move, though blood trickled slowly from his wounds.

"He's killed him, and it's a mortal shame!" cried the bargee. "Wire in, mates! We'll have it out of them. Pick up the butcher and carry him 'ome some on yer."

There was a threatening movement amongst the crowd.

A sturdy phalanx surrounded the insensible and defeated butcher.

They took him up, and the throng opened for them to carry him away.

Then it closed again upon the little knot of university men with threatening gestures and loud threats.

The riot became general, and the hostility of the townsmen was directed against everyone who wore a gown.

Jack was like a man who wields a sickle in a cornfield.

He cleared a gap in front of him and pushed onwards.

It seemed impossible to stop him.

O'Rafferty snatched a stick from a cattle-drover, and after the manner of a warm-hearted, impulsive Irishman, who fought for the fun of the thing, knocked people about right and left, and broke heads at his own sweet will.

"Hurrah for Erin!" he cried. "That's a knock-down blow for you, ye spalpeen! Come on, the next of you. *Ceade mille failhe!* Hundred thousand welcomes to you. How do you like that? Bedad that's another for your upper story! Whoop! Erin go Bragh! I'm the blooy with a yard of good blackthorn. Whoop!"

Jack's blows fell like those of a sledge-hammer, and Carden worked away as mechanically as if he had been pulling the stroke-oar of the university eight.

But the gownsmen were outnumbered.

It was fortunate for our little band of heroes that the cry of "Police!" was raised.

A strong body of constables made the crowd run in various directions.

They had their truncheons drawn, and would have used them if provoked.

Superintendent Manisty was at their head.

On seeing Jack covered with blood, for he had not escaped untouched, he said—

"This won't do, Mr. Harkaway. It's against the law."

"Very sorry, Manisty; couldn't help it," replied Jack, "the roughs would have it."

"Get away to the right, sir," continued Manisty. "We will keep the crowd back; the senior proctor and his bull-dogs are on the left looking for gowns."

"Thank you," answered Jack.

Raising his voice, he added—

"Gown to the right, quick!"

Making a determined burst, and aided by the police, the Oxford men forced their way through and beat a retreat, getting back to their colleges, through by-streets, as well as they could.

Jack, on reaching his own rooms, found Monday looking very disconsolate.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Missey Ada gone, sare. Got a note to say think no more of her," replied Monday.

The tears came to the poor fellow's eyes as he spoke.

"This is Dawson's doing," said Jack. "But there may yet be time to save her."

"You do that for me, sare," exclaimed Monday joyfully, "and save Monday's life. He die without um pretty English girl."

"If I can rely upon a conversation I overheard, she has gone to Abingdon," continued Jack. "Silly child, she doesn't know her danger."

"I make her good husband, but she not like um colour," replied Monday.

"Better be the wife of an honest man like you, Monday, than——" Jack broke off abruptly.

"Go to the station and wait for me; we will take the first train," he added.

He was determined to save La Favorita if possible, and at the same time to make Monday happy.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

A NOBLE DEED.

THE journey between Oxford and Abingdon was silent if not sad.

Monday was too anxious to speak much, and Harkaway amused himself by reading a paper and smoking a cigar.

He had no defined plan of action in his mind.

When they reached Abingdon, they put up at a small inn near the station.

Entering the coffee-room, Jack ordered a rumpsteak and oyster sauce.

"Um can't eat no steak, sare," said Monday.

"Why not?"

"Lost all um appetite. Never eat no more if not find Missey Ada."

"You're a flat then," said Jack, "for a man's stomach is like the tire of a railway carriage wheel; it must be well greased now and then, or it won't go."

Monday shook his head sorrowfully.

"No, sare," he said, "it all over with Monday if things not come right. How you feel, Mast' Jack, if Missey Emily give you cold shoulder and get other mans?"

"I shouldn't be like a father at a christening," replied Jack, with a smile.

The coffee-room in which they were sitting was divided into small boxes, with high wooden partitions.

These somewhat resembled the old-fashioned pews in some country churches.

Jack and Monday were situated at the end of the room, rather in the shadow.

They could see everyone who came in, without being seen themselves.

Just as Monday had finished speaking, a lady and gentleman entered.

Monday was about to spring from his seat, but Jack, seizing his arm, restrained him.

"Are you mad? Sit still," he whispered.

Monday controlled himself with a great effort.

It was hard to be quiet, for he had seen the girl he loved with all the passion of a first affection, springing from a pure and noble nature.

She was hanging tremblingly upon the arm of Sir Sydney Dawson.

As luck would have it, they took up their position in the box next to Jack.

All they said could be heard.

"Waiter," said Sir Sydney.

"Sir?"

"Can we have a private room?"

"No, sir; very sorry, sir," said the waiter. "All engaged."

"Ah! never mind. Order a bedroom to be got ready. This young lady is my sister, and she will sleep here to-night."

"Very good, sir."

"And, I say, waiter, bring me a pint of dry sherry and some biscuits."

The waiter departed, and Sir Sydney continued—

"You must stay here to-night Favorita; to-morrow I will come over from Oxford early, and take apartments for you."

"Oh," said Ada, "I wish I had never left the shop. I do feel so dreadfully wicked."

"Nonsense, my child; I have promised to marry you when I come of age in a month or two. Will not that satisfy you?"

"Why not at once?"

"I can not. I am not my own master, and should offend my guardian."

"Oh, do let me go back. It is not yet too late," she pleaded.

"Certainly not; you are only a little nervous," he said. "Besides, you have gone too far to repent; remember you wrote a letter to your employer, saying you were going to be married, and we have been seen together."

Ada sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Where is your love for me?" asked Dawson, much annoyed.

"I am so frightened," she answered.

"What at?"

"Being alone and in your power."

"As if I would harm you. My love shall shield you from all evil. In Scotland, it is only necessary for people to live together as man and wife to constitute a marriage. Let us fancy ourselves across the border."

"If you would make me your wife at once, I should be happier," she urged.

"How can I? Be reasonable, my Favorita. Do you want to ruin me?"

"Let me go back to the shop until you can."

"They won't have you now."

"Then I can go to my friends. My father will keep me, and my mother and brothers love me! Oh, if you were to deceive me, what misery I should bring into our happy home. Father would never live to hear my shame."

"For goodness' sake, don't make a scene," said Sir Sydney, testily. "Here is the waiter with the wine."

There was silence for a time.

When the wine was placed on the table, and they

fancied themselves alone, the baronet resumed: "You will be Lady Dawson, my pet; think of that."

"Can I trust you?" she asked.

"Of course you can."

"I have heard of so many girls in Oxford being cruelly deceived by university gentlemen."

"There may be scamps up at Oxford," said Sir Sydney; "but you ought to know me too well by this time, my dear girl, to class me amongst them."

"Sydney, you love me—you have said so," she said, quickly and earnestly. "If you do love me truly, yield to my prayer, and let me go to-night by the train to Reading, where my parents live. You can come there and visit me; they are poor and humble, but honest and respectable."

This didn't suit Dawson at all.

He would have loved the girl for a month or two in his own selfish manner.

Then he would have cast her off, as one throws away an old glove.

There was no thought of an honourable marriage in his mind.

He had a sort of horror of parents and brothers.

"No," he said, decisively; "the die is cast. You have put yourself in my hands, Favorita, and you must do as I wish and tell you."

"Oh, Sydney, have you no mercy?" she sobbed.

"I must be cruel to be kind. It is for your good."

"Well, well," she said, despairingly, "may Heaven deal with you, as you do with me. I am poor, helpless, friendless. I can not resist you. Oh, if I had anyone to save me from my folly, while there is yet time."

"You have no one," said Sydney, in a tone of triumph.

"Lean your head on my arm, and let me wipe away those naughty tears."

Jack released his hold on Monday's arm.

"Now," he said, quietly.

Monday sprang up like a wild beast from its lair, appearing before the astonished pair like a spirit fallen from the clouds, or sprung from the earth. He exclaimed—

"Missey Ada, you say you got no friend. Monday your friend. He take you home to fader, moder, and save you from ruin."

Ada looked thankfully at him.

"Matabella," she replied, for she had learnt to call him by his kingly name, "I thank Heaven you have come."

Sir Sydney Dawson's handsome features were distorted with rage. Rising to his feet, he said—

"Ada, my child, what can you and this black scum have in common?"

"He's my friend," she answered.

"I'll throw him out of the window; how dare he come here and act like a spy upon me?" cried Sir Sydney.

"No do that, sare," replied Monday, drawing himself up to his full height, in all the pride of his youthful strength; "me able to fight. Two can play at throw from window."

"You vagabond," answered Sir Sydney; "be off, or I'll make you repent this."

Jack now appeared upon the scene.

Sir Sydney was petrified with surprise.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

MONDAY IS HAPPY.

"You here too, Harkaway!" said the baronet; "but I might have expected that you would not be far off, when your black bully made his appearance."

"You will pardon me," answered Jack in a gentlemanly tone, "if I beg you to speak more respectfully of Monday."

"What?—speak respectfully of a servant!" said Dawson, with a sneer.

"Monday is my friend."

"A nice sort of a friend to have, certainly."

"Why not?—he is a king in his own country," answered Jack.

"Pity he did not stop there. He is only fit to be a crossing-sweeper over here."

"Let me tell you," said Jack, "that he can trace his descent for centuries, from a long line of distinguished ancestors."

"Who made graves for their enemies in their own stomachs," replied Dawson, "the cannibals."

"They have not enjoyed the same advantage of civilisation that you have," answered Jack, "but I will venture to say that there is not a man in the island of Limbi so base as to attempt to destroy the happiness and ruin the honour of a poor, confiding, silly girl."

"Who can say that of me?" asked Sir Sydney, fiercely.

"I did not accuse you, but can your conscience acquit you?"

"Of what?"

"Of deceiving this poor girl."

Jack pointed to Ada as he spoke.

"I think it would be very much more becoming in you to mind your own business."

"It is my business, since I have made it so," replied Jack. "Monday loves Ada. He is my friend. I have by accident arrived upon the scene at a most critical moment in her fate."

"Well, what do you want to do?"

"Let me ask her a question."

"A dozen if you like," said Sir Sydney, with a reckless laugh.

"My dear girl," said Jack, tenderly, "would you like to return to your friends at Reading to-night with King Matabella?"

"Yes."

"You hear that?" cried Jack.

"She does not know her own mind," growled Sir Sydney.

Monday placed his arm round Ada's waist, and drew her up close to his side.

She did not resent this liberty.

"Go away both of you," said Dawson. "Tell him to let go the Favorita's waist, or I shall do something desperate to him."

"You must not threaten us," Jack replied, with the confidence of conviction; "we are two to one."

"Am I to see the girl carried off before my eyes?" asked Dawson.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"How do I know that your intentions are honourable?"

"You can come with me to her family at Reading, if you like," said Jack.

Sir Sydney bit his lips till the blood came.

His countenance assumed a cadaverous hue.

Suddenly he fell down on the floor in a fit, foaming at the mouth and clutching the empty air wildly with his hands.

Jack rang the bell.

"Waiter!" he said, "see to this gentleman; he is ill."

The waiter instantly busied himself with Sir Sydney, and Jack went to the bar and paid for all that had been ordered, and left the hotel, assisting to support Ada, who was in a half-fainting condition.

They went to the station, where they caught a train for Reading, and enjoyed a carriage to themselves.

"Talk to her, Monday," whispered Jack, "and see if she loves you."

For a short time Monday and Ada were in close conversation.

Then Monday uttered a cry like a war-whoop.

"It am come all right, sare. Missey Ada say she not really care for Sir Sydney, and she will be my little wife," he said.

"I congratulate you, Monday," answered Jack.

In half an hour more they arrived at the house of John Radford, plumber and glazier, who was Ada's father.

Mr. and Mrs. Radford and their two sons received their daughter and her companions with that unstudied civility which contrasts so favourably with the stuck-up ceremony of many in a higher position.

They were not prejudiced against Monday on account of his dark skin.

It was enough for them that he was the man of Ada's choice.

Mrs. Radford even went so far as to say—"Well, for a coloured gentleman, he's very handsome and quite nice-mannered, though I think Ada's been a little sly in telling us nothing about her engagement to the last."

They did not know all.

Nor was it advisable they should.

When Monday left the comfortable and happy cottage of John Radford, it was as the accepted lover of Ada.

When they reached the quad of St. Aldate's rather late

at night, they heard that Sir Sydney Dawson had returned from Abingdon like a madman.

He had broken into a freshman's rooms, and taking out all his furniture, piled it up in a heap in the quad before anyone could stop him.

Then he set fire to it, and danced round it wildly, telling the men who were looking on at his eccentric gambols that he was burning Harkaway.

The dean made his appearance when the bonfire was at its height.

"Who has done this?" he inquired sternly.

"It's my fire," answered Sir Sydney. "I'm cold, and it seemed to me a good opportunity to burn Harkaway."

"You are intoxicated, sir," replied the dean, angrily.

"I shall send for you to-morrow morning."

Sir Sydney was induced to go to bed where he soon fell into a profound slumber.

The next day he had to go to the Dean of St. Aldate's.

For some time past the dons had been very tolerant of the vagaries of the members of the college.

Now they determined to make an example.

Sir Sydney Dawson was rusticated, or sent away from the college for two years.

He never took up his residence there again; but going up to London, became one of the fastest men about town, and speedily ran through a handsome fortune.

Jack did not feel sorry for him.

Sir Sydney was only one of the many examples of what living in the fast set, as it is called, will reduce a man to in time.

The time for the examination came at last.

It was with a throbbing heart, but a cool head, that Jack went with many others into the schools.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE CLASS LIST.

ALL the time that the examination in different subjects lasted, the greatest excitement reigned amongst the reading men.

Franklin and Harkaway were considered as the representatives of St. Aldate's.

It was admitted they stood the best chance.

But there were many men from other colleges who had been burning the midnight oil for many weary months.

There were men also who had been diligently cramming with private tutors.

Who could say which would come out first?

Mr. Mole was a constant visitor at Jack's room, and gave him little confidential tips and wrinkles.

Mole was a good scholar, and Jack found his help very useful.

When the examination was over, Jack became nervous and anxious.

His brain had been kept for some time on the stretch.

The next day the list would be posted outside the schools.

Day big with the fate of trembling undergraduates!

In the evening, Harvey, Mr. Mole and Carden, came to talk to and cheer him up.

O'Rafferty also dropped in.

He too had been up for his bachelor's and he was anxious as to the result, though he did not show it.

"Another of my pupils," said Mr. Mole; "and how have you fared with the examiners?"

"Oh, splendiferous," answered O'Rafferty; "they couldn't puzzle me. Putting me on in scripture history, they asked why Cain didn't spare his brother."

"What did you say?" inquired Mr. Mole.

"Because he wasn't 'able.'"

"This flippancy will do you no good. I wish young men were as steady in these days as they were in mine," sighed Mr. Mole.

"Me dear sir," said O'Rafferty, "you belong to a past age."

"And you belong to a fast one," said Mole.

"Bravo, that's one for you, sir," exclaimed Jack.

"If I'm stumped, it's through having a bad coach," observed O'Rafferty.

"Sir, that remark is a reflection upon me," replied Mr. Mole. "If you do not withdraw it, I will give you a thrashing."

"At what?"

"Cards," said Mr. Mole, blandly. "I think, as your labours are over, Harkaway, we may indulge in a mild game of loo, limited to four and sixpence."

"As you like," replied Harkaway. "But what about your wife?"

"What of her?"

"Suppose she comes after you."

"No matter, I am Julius Cæsar. She has had a lesson or two lately, and I defy her."

At this moment the door was pushed gently open.

Ambonia appeared.

"Isaac!" she said.

"Yes, my dear, I'm coming; didn't mean to stop so late," he said in confusion, as he fumbled for his hat in a corner.

"Good-night, Julius," said Jack, laughing.

"Bye-bye, Cæsar, old boy," exclaimed Harvey.

"Ta, ta, Mole; be a good child," cried Tom Carden.

"Oh! be jabers," cried O'Rafferty, "he's under orders for foreign service; he's got the route."

Ambonia said nothing to anyone, for she had come to consider all her husband's friends as her natural enemies.

Seizing the unresisting Mole by the arm, she led him off in triumph, and pinched him black and blue all the way down the staircase, till he yelled with pain.

The next day Buster called his master early, and at breakfast-time Jack and Harvey, who came out of chapel together, tried to do justice to a very "decent spread," as the latter called it.

Jack, however, could not eat.

"Will you go to the schools for me, and look at the list?" he said. "I haven't the pluck."

"Go and see," said Harvey.

There was Mr. Mole, Carden, O'Rafferty and several others.

Half an hour had elapsed.

Harvey rushed into the room.

Everyone regarded him with anxiety.

Jack turned very pale.

This sort of thing was different from rowing a race or playing a game at cricket.

In that line of country he knew pretty well what he could do.

Mr. Mole was the first to speak.

"Harvey," he exclaimed, "what news? Is the list out? Who is——"

"Harkaway's taken a double first, and he heads the list," answered Harvey.

Jack felt fainter still at hearing this.

Harvey took off his hat and waved it in the air.

"Three times three!" he cried. "Give him a cheer; he deserves it."

A loud, hearty English cheer broke out, and rang through the room.

Friends came round Jack and shook him by the hand.

Mr. Mole approached, and said—"My dear boy—for I must call you that, as you are still young, and have been my pupil and companion so many years——"

"Call me what you like," answered Jack.

"You are an honour to the university. I know you think me a poor, silly, hen-pecked old man, but my head is still clear, Harkaway, and I tell you that you are an honour to Oxford."

A happy calm stole over Jack's features.

He had not worked in vain.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

HUNSTON'S DREAM.

WHEN the enthusiastic congratulations which overwhelmed Jack were over, O'Rafferty said—

"And, plase, where may my name be?"

"Nowhere," answered Harvey.

"By the bones of St. Patrick, it's joking you are."

"I didn't see it, I give you my word."

"It's like the luck of the O'Raffertys; their merits are never properly appreciated out of their own swate country," philosophically answered O'Rafferty.

"You'll excuse me, you fellows, I know," said Jack.

"Going out?" asked Harvey.

"Yes, I want to send a brace of telegrams."

Putting on his hat, he went to the telegraph office, and when in the street he began to whistle, he was so happy. While with his friends he did not like to show his joy, but alone his delight knew no bounds.

His first telegram was to his father, to whom he said—

"Glad to tell you I have taken a double first, and head the class list. Look in to-morrow's *Times*. Love to mother."

The second was to Emily, and nearly in the same words, though he added—"We shall soon be happy now, my own, as I shall leave Oxford at the end of the term, and then you have only to name the day."

As he was leaving the telegraph office, he met the superintendent of the Oxford police.

"Good-day, Mr. Harkaway. I was just coming up to you. Beg to congratulate you."

"About what?" asked Jack modestly, affecting to misunderstand him.

"Your success in the schools."

"When did you hear it?"

"Oh, it's always put about directly, and by this time it is known all over Oxford."

"Thank you, Manisty," replied Jack; "I did my best.

My maxim is this, if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well."

"May I offer you a glass of wine, sir?" he said.

"I will accept one with pleasure; but why were you coming up to me?"

"I'll tell you presently," answered Manisty.

They turned into the "Mitre," and the superintendent ordered two glasses of sherry.

"Now, sir," he said, "I am going to surprise you."

"Fire away," replied Jack; "I like a little excitement now and then."

"You know a price has been set on Hunston?"

"A reward of fifty pounds, isn't it?"

"Exactly; and I have received information from the London police, which I am disposed to act upon."

"What is it?"

"My telegram from Scotland Yard describes a man who answers Hunston's description to a T."

"Is he in London?"

"Yes," replied Manisty. "The fellow, if he is Hunston, is living in a low part of Shadwell, waiting to get off in a ship now loading in the docks."

"Where is she bound?" asked Jack.

"That I do not know; details are wanting. What I want to ask you is this, will you come with me to identify this Hunston, as you know him better than anyone else?"

"Well," said Jack, "it's a nasty sort of business. I don't half like turning policeman. No offence to you, Manisty."

"Certainly not, sir; you are a gentleman and I am a thief-taker; every man to his trade."

"On consideration, I think I shall be furthering the ends of justice if I go with you," said Jack.

"And more than that; if he gets fifteen years or becomes a 'lifer,' you will be rid of a dangerous and sleepless enemy, who, from what I know of recent events in your history, Mr. Harkaway, has done you as much harm as one man can do another."

"Quite right," replied Jack, thinking of the cave; he deserves no mercy at my hands. When do you start?"

"This afternoon, by the 2:30"

"Very well. I will order my scout to pack my baggage, and meet you at the station."

"That's settled! good-bye, sir, for the present," said

Manisty. "I must run now, as I have a lot of things to do between this and then."

We will leave Harkaway and Manisty to travel to London, to act upon the information received from the London police, and visit Hunston in his lair.

We can call it nothing else than a lair, for it was a veritable den.

He had sought the lowest part of the river side below Wapping, amongst foreign sailors and abandoned women, thieves and wretches of every description.

The police were after him.

He had heard of the reward offered for him, and feared that he would be severely punished if caught.

Death was preferable to penal servitude to a man like Hunston.

He intended to get away to some foreign country with his plunder.

This he kept sewn up in the lining of his waistcoat.

It amounted to several thousand pounds.

So it was not from necessity that he lived in filth and squalor.

On the evening of the day when Harkaway and Manisty left Oxford to look for him, Hunston was low and nervous.

His instinct warned him of approaching danger.

He had been feverish and restless all day.

Towards four o'clock he went to a cookshop and had a sixpenny plate of meat.

Returning to his room—for he had only one—he threw himself on the dirty bed and smoked a short clay pipe.

That night at half-past seven o'clock a ship was to sail for Spain.

In her he had taken a passage.

He selected Spain as a country to stay in for a while, because there is no extradition treaty between the English and the Spaniards.

After a time the pipe slipped from Hunston's hand, and he fell asleep.

He had a dream.

His wandering mind called him to the island where he had been wrecked with Mr. Mole, Harvey, Jack, and Maple.

The poor unfortunate boy, who had become bad owing to Hunston's evil example.

He fancied he was standing by his grave.
That grave which Jack had ornamented with a tiny wooden cross.

He thought he saw the little fellow lying still and cold on the ground just as he was when the Pisangs killed him.

Suddenly Maple rose up and, in a sepulchral voice, said to Hunston—

“You have brought me to this—your turn will come next.”

Then an old man came by, and, looking at the corpse, raised his arm threateningly against Hunston.

After him came a troop of brothers and sisters.

Last of all passed the mother, and she cried to heaven for vengeance.

A cold sweat broke out all over Hunston.

He trembled violently and woke.

Looking at his watch, he saw it was half-past six.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “it’s lucky I woke—what on earth made me go to roost?—in three-quarters of an hour the ship leaves the dock. I should have lost my passage.”

He dashed his hand over his clammy brow.

“What a dream!” he cried. “Poor Maple! but he was always a little humbug.”

Opening the window he looked out.

The house he inhabited was built on the side of a creek, and water ran between it and the houses on the other side.

Barges came up to various docks and yards when the tide was full, which it was at the moment.

A window at a house opposite opened as he was looking out.

A man appeared at it.

“You have not wanted me yet, old pal,” said the man.

“No,” replied Hunston, “but there is no telling; perhaps I may. Look out.”

“I’m always on the watch,” was the answer.

The distance between the two houses was probably thirty feet or thereabouts.

The height of Hunston’s window from the water, about fifteen.

It was necessary to be precise, in order to make what follows intelligible.

Just as he had finished speaking, there was a noise at the door.

It was locked.

"Opsler ownder elowber," said a voice.

"Slops down below," repeated Hunston to himself; "that means police; they are after me. I have no time to lose."

He became very pale and trembled in every limb.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

MR. MOLE AND HIS BETTER HALF.

THE delight of Mole, at hearing his old pupil, Jack Harkaway, had taken a double first was extreme.

He drank glass after glass of wine. He shouted hurrah till he was hoarse.

Then he leaped to his feet, and danced a break-down on the hearthrug.

"Hip, hip, hurrah! Three cheers for Harkaway, three cheers for my old pupil," cried Mr. Mole, swaying backwards and forwards to the imminent danger of the ornaments on the mantel shelf.

"Sure, an' it's a fine row ye are making," said O'Rafferty. "Be quiet, you stupid old fool, and don't be after wearing all the colour out of the hearthrug, while its owner is out of the way."

"Sir," said Mr. Mole, balancing himself on one leg, and glaring at O'Rafferty, "who do you call an old fool."

"Why you to be sure," replied the young Irishman.

"This to me, Isaac Mole," cried the indignant coach, "I'll not stand it—I'll——"

Mr. Mole forgetting that he was balancing himself on one leg, essayed to take a step without placing down the one he had raised, and fell all of a heap into the fender.

Such a clatter he made as he sent the tongs one way, the shovel another, and the poker springing into the middle of the room.

Mr. Mole threw his legs on to the hearthrug with some difficulty.

Neither O'Rafferty, Carden, or Harvey could assist him to his feet for laughing.

"I wish Jack was here to see him," said Harvey.

"Get up," cried O'Rafferty. "What do you want to be kicking like a blackbeetle for. Blue Murder, but it's burnt you'll be if you stay there much longer."

At this moment a hot coal fell out of the fire on to Mole's hair.

In a moment it was in a blaze.

"Murder, fire!" cried Mole, springing to his feet.

"Put me out, put me out."

Carden rubbed his hands over Mole's hair, and extinguished the flames.

"I'll put you out, you good-for-nothing bad man," cried a voice, and Ambonia, flushed with rage, entered the room.

The sound of that voice seemed to partially sober Mole. His face turned white.

"What you get drunk again for?" shrieked Ambonia; "look at your hair."

Mr. Mole looked from one to another and finally rested his bleared eyes on his dusky wife.

"You good-for-nothing, bad man," cried Ambonia, "only look at yourself."

"My dear," said Mr. Mole, staggering backwards, "I can't spare time to look at myself, all I can do is to look at you."

"Don't talk to me," shrieked Ambonia, "or I shall forget myself," and she worked her fingers nervously.

"Forget yourself," said Mr. Mole, with an imbecile grin. "No fear of that, only wish you'd forget yourself."

"What's that you say?" she asked.

"Nothing, my dear. Hadn't you better go home and look after the children. We can do without you."

"You can, can you, Mr. Mole?" said Ambonia, in a tone full of suppressed rage.

"Of course we can, can't we, my friends?"

And Mole turned appealingly to the young men, who found it difficult to suppress their laughter.

But neither answered.

Ambonia glared angrily around the apartment.

Then she turned to her husband.

"Mr. Mole," she said.

"Well, Mrs. Mole?" he replied.

"Go home, sir."

And she pointed to the door.

"Eh?" said Mole.

"Go home."

"Did you speak to me, ma'am?"

"I did, and you better do as I say," cried the lady.

"Then I shan't," said Mole, thrusting his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and glaring at his wife. "If I do may I——"

Mr. Mole did not get any further.

Before he could finish the sentence, Mrs. Mole had seized him by the hair and the collar of his coat, and was shaking him unmercifully.

"Do-do-don't," cried Mr. Mole. "You-you'll make me bald."

"Be aisy, me darling," said O'Rafferty. "Sure an' that's not the way to serve your husband."

"Mind um own bisness," said Ambonia, "if you don't, um serve you the same."

This threat called forth a peal of laughter from Harvey and Tom Carden.

"It's meself as would be sorry to offend a lady," said O'Rafferty. "But, by the howly poker, I should be after dropping you out of the window if you attempted it."

"Just try him, my dear," said Mole, "I wish you would let go of me, and give O'Rafferty a chance of becoming the best friend I ever had."

"Come on, me darling," said the young Irishman, as he turned and opened the window, "and I'll drop you out nately on to the stones."

Ambonia only scowled at him, and shook Mole the more furiously.

"Come home, you sare," she said.

"Shan't," said Mole. "Don't order me about. I'm master, and I won't be put down by you."

"That's right," said Harvey. "Bravo Mole."

"What for you encourage my husband to defy me?" cried Ambonia.

"Don't be henpecked any longer, Mole," said Carden.

"If she won't know her place just tache it her," put in O'Rafferty.

Ambonia, still holding her staggering husband, turned upon them.

"You bad lot," she hissed through her clenched teeth, "I like to kill you all."

"And eat us as well," said O'Rafferty. "Bedad but it's a mighty tough bit you'd be finding me I take it."

Harvey now came forward.

Laying his hand gently on Ambonia's arm, he said—

"Ambonia, you must not be angry with Mole for taking a little drop too much to-day in honour of Jack Harkaway's success. Come now, kiss and be friends."

"No, no," cried Mole. "Don't ask her to kiss me, Harvey."

"Why not, sir?"

"Why not, Harvey, because she'd bite; she's such a vixen when her temper's up."

"Me no kiss him. Him smell of drink. Ugh. I sooner kick than kiss."

"Well then, let go his hair."

"When I get him home, not before," said Ambonia.

"But you must. Come now, be a reasonable woman, Ambonia; let go."

"I won't," said Ambonia, in a determined voice.

But no persuasion could induce Ambonia to release her husband.

Mr. Mole, who at first appeared to have lost all courage, now began to pluck up again.

"Ambonia," he cried, "you disgrace me before my friends. I will not submit to be treated thus. Once for all, will you release me?"

"When I get you home, not before," was the determined reply.

"Then I will never go home again," replied Mole.

"Never. I renounce you, I discard you, I——"

"What um matter?" asked Monday, at this moment putting his head in at the door.

"Come here, Monday," said Carden, "and put an end to this scene."

Monday saw in a moment how things stood, and seizing Ambonia's hands he instantly released Mole.

"Now you cut home, sare," he said, "Monday hold Ambonia till you get away."

Mole finding himself released, at once staggered from

the room, followed by Harvey and Carden, and went off home as quickly as he could.

Ambonia struggled to free herself from Monday, but to no purpose.

He held her in a grip of iron.

Nor did he suffer her to depart till he felt sure Mole was not likely to be overtaken by her.

The moment, however, that she was free she hurried off after her husband vowing vengeance upon him.

And so we will leave them and return to Hunston.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE PURSUIT OF HUNSTON.

TAKING a coil of rope from under the bed, Hunston went to the window, and hitched one end by a slip-knot to a strong iron hook.

"Hi!" he cried.

The old man who had before appeared at the opposite window came out again.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Catch!" replied Hunston; "and look slippery."

He cast the other end of the rope over.

The first time it fell short.

"Curse it!" he cried.

There was a loud knocking at the door.

Hunston threw the rope a second time, and the man grasped it.

He hooked it to a nail, and it swung across the creek.

"Is it taut?" asked Hunston.

"Ay, ay," replied the man. "I have not been an old sailor for nothing."

A violent crash was heard.

The door of the room was broken open.

Manisty, a policeman, and Jack appeared on the threshold.

Hunston grasped his pistol.

He glared like a demon upon Jack.

"Is that the man?" asked Manisty.

"It is Hunston," answered Harkaway.

"I have a warrant for your arrest," said Manisty.

"Take that, then," replied Hunston.

He fired his pistol point blank at the superintendent of the Oxford police.

"Manisty fell to the ground with a groan.

Harkaway made a dash at Hunston, who eluded his grasp and went through the window.

He laid hold of the rope and passed himself across.

It was a terrible risk to run.

Jack seized the revolver which Hunston had dropped.

There were several barrels not discharged.

"Stop," he cried, running to the window and looking out, "or I fire."

"Fire and be——!" Hunston replied.

The man was entirely in Jack's power.

He could have shot him down like a rat or a rabbit.

Nor did he deserve any mercy, for he had fired upon Manisty, who lay writhing in his blood on the floor.

But again the nobleness of his nature asserted itself.

"I can't kill him, poor devil," he murmured.

And he flung the pistol on the ground.

Hunston meanwhile made the best of his opportunity.

He reached the opposite house, having clung to the rope like a cat or a monkey, and, climbing in through the window, disappeared.

Jack turned his attention to Manisty.

The superintendent was shot through the arm, and the wound was easily seen not to be fatal.

A doctor was sent for, who bandaged it up; and had him conveyed to the London Hospital. Hunston had escaped again.

This was very disappointing to Harkaway, who had made sure that his old and lifelong enemy was in his power at last.

He could not help admiring the dexterity and pluck with which he—a one-armed man—had crossed from one house to the other by means of the rope.

It was a hazardous experiment.

If he had made a slip, he would have been precipitated into the waters of the creek, and probably drowned.

Hunston had always shown himself full of energy and resource.

But his cleverness had invariably been directed into a wrong channel.

His ends were bad, his actions vicious.

He was, however, an enemy by no means to be despised ; and, for this reason, Jack determined to leave no stone unturned to capture him.

That he would attempt to leave the country he had no doubt.

This must be prevented at all hazards, and Jack resolved to reside in the neighbourhood, and hunt him up, if possible.

His first act was to find a place where he could obtain sleeping accommodation.

He did not mind how low it was ; perhaps, for his purpose, the lower the better.

A little walking about brought him to Ratcliff Highway, where there are numerous public-houses, containing music and dancing saloons, with beds for seafaring men.

At one of these, called "Paddy's Goose," he engaged a room.

Then he went to a telegraph station and wired to Oxford, asking Harvey and Monday to join him, as soon as possible, at this singular rendezvous.

It was indeed a strange place for an Oxford undergraduate to select.

At the same time, it was the most likely spot for Jack to meet the person he was in search of.

Hunston would not go to the West-end in pursuit of amusement ; he would look for it in the neighbourhood of the docks.

There was a chance of his wasting his time, for Hunston might get away in some ship.

He knew nothing about his plans or movements.

Yet he fancied that such a dare-devil fellow as Hunston was, might choose to have what is called a spree for one night before he banished himself from his native country.

To put an obstacle in his way of escaping, he proceeded to the nearest police-station in Whitechapel, and asked the superintendent to have the departing ships in the docks watched.

He gave a description of Hunston, and, as it was known that Manisty, of Oxford, had been shot, the police were very anxious to capture his assailant.

Officers in plain clothes were sent to all the points of departure.

Jack's next move was to the shop of a dealer in clothes, wigs, etc. ; there he disguised himself in a fur coat, dark beard, whiskers, and a pair of spectacles.

It made him look twenty years older.

When this was accomplished, he had some dinner, and returned to "Paddy's Goose," just as the merriment was in full swing.

The orchestra was doing its best to play waltz music ; half-tipsy sailors were dancing with painted women, drinking and smoking were indulged in by others, and there were all the sounds of revelry by night.

Walking up the room, Jack looked at the tables on the left side, and did not see Hunston.

There was no particular reason why he should see him, but he had an instinct that he would meet him there.

He stopped at the bar, where vile decoctions, under the names of brandy, rum, gin, and whisky, were briskly retailed.

Nor did he find his man there.

The bandsmen—a rheumatic fiddler, an asthmatical piccolo (who shrieked rather than blew), a wheezy cornet, and a harpist whose days were over—struggled, as well as frequent supplies of liquor would let them, with the "Beautiful Blue Danube" waltz.

He walked down the right side of the "long room," as it was called.

Before going half-a-dozen yards, he saw Hunston, sitting at a table smoking a cigar, with a glass of smoking-hot brandy and water before him.

By his side was an evil-looking, middle-aged, short-cropped, pug-nosed, bullet-headed ruffian.

A waiter was standing close by.

"Give your orders, gents !" he exclaimed.

"What will you have, Bo's'n Bob?" asked Hunston.

"Rum 'ot, and plenty of sugar in, mind," replied the man.

He was the fellow who had warned Hunston of the coming of the police, and enabled him to cross the creek by the aid of the rope.

Bo's'n Bob had been a sailor, but was now a thief and a loafer on shore.

After his flight from Oxford, Hunston had picked him up and made his acquaintance in a low public-house near the docks.

He had served him well, as we know.

Jack took a seat at the table, and owing to his disguise, Hunston did not recognise him.

Giving him a casual look, he put him down for a German Jew.

Bo's'n Bob had only just come in.

When the waiter returned with what he had ordered, Jack asked for a tankard of beer and a cigar.

The frequenters of the "long room," the like of which is duplicated in Water Street, New York, and in Melbourne and Sydney, were still gyrating to the strains of the "Blue Danube."

"The ship's gone two hours sooner than she was timed for," said Bo's'n Bob.

"What a beastly nuisance," replied Hunston. "Are you sure?"

"I've been to the wharf."

"I wouldn't like to call you a liar, but I'm dubious. Do you mean to tell me there's a reward offered for me, and——"

"Don't talk like that, captain," interrupted Bo's'n Bob; "I'm straight—I'm square as they make 'em."

"I can't understand it."

"There'll be another ship for Cadiz in three days."

"You fool, I may be caught in the meantime."

"Go somewhere else, then."

"No. I've made up my mind to travel in Spain and Italy," Hunston replied. "Besides, if I go to France, or America, I am more likely to be wired after, and searched for there."

"Shall I take you to a good hiding-place for a day or two?" said Bo's'n Bob.

"Where's that?"

"'Noah's Ark,' my lad. That's where I'll take you."

Hunston looked at him as if he were either drunk or mad, for there did not seem to be any relevancy in this answer to his question.

"What the deuce do you mean?" he demanded.

"I'll tell you," replied Bo's'n Bob; "but I don't think it advisable to let out too much in a public place like this."

You're a hunted man, and of course don't want your address to be chalked upon every wall."

"Thank you. I put myself unreservedly in your hands."

"You can't do better. I'll see you right," said Bo's'n Bob. "As you shot the policeman, there'll be a hue-and-cry after you."

"Sure to be,

"Keep close; I'll do the biz, go about and get the news. I reckon the outward-bound ships will be watched for a time."

"I shouldn't wonder," remarked Hunston. "Harkaway is just as bitter against me as I am towards him. He will do all he can to get me between four stone walls. You are my only friend—you, a stranger almost, and yet I feel I can trust you."

"You may do that," said Bo's'n Bob. "You pay me well for my services—and I like money."

"Why do you like money?" he inquired.

"Because I hate work. Money enables a man to live at his ease. I never go to sea while I have any coin."

"Then you would do any thing for gold?"

"Almost every thing—'cepting, of course, selling a pal," replied Bo's'n Bob, with a wink and a leer.

Hunston regarded him suspiciously.

He looked just the kind of man who would betray a friend with as much promptitude and duplicity as Judas betrayed his Master.

Yet he could not shake the fellow off.

Unable at present to leave the shores of England, he was entirely in his power.

He was compelled to place his trust in him, whether he would or not, though he knew that the man might hand him over to the detectives at any moment.

"I will see that you have enough money in return for what you do for me, to make your cruise ashore last out another six months," Hunston said.

"Good enough; it's a deal. I'm on," cried Bo's'n Bob.

"Will that suit you?"

"Down to the ground, Boss. You're a king, and I'll hide you away in the 'Noah's Ark' until the cops are off the scent, and you can get away to the Spanish coast."

"What and where is this 'Noah's Ark' you keep on talking about?" Hunston queried.

Bo's'n Bob grinned, and looked very knowing.

"I ain't giving any thing away to-day," he replied.

"You might as well let me know."

"Not I. My head is too level for that, you bet. I've hid in the 'Noah's Ark' for weeks, when there's been a police movement after me, and not one never came near."

"By Jove! you arouse my curiosity. Is it——"

"Hold on; you won't get it out of me, that's straight. All in good time. Fact is"—Bo's'n Bob lowered his voice—"I don't like the look of that rooster over there," pointing to Jack Harkaway.

"That one with the beard, whiskers, and spectacles?" asked Hunston.

"Yes; he's taking it all in and piping us off. I believe he's a moocher."

"What's that?"

"Why, a spy—one that mooches about for the police. Wipe off your chin."

"Eh—what?" Hunston replied, being puzzled to find a meaning for some of his friend's remarks.

"Don't talk. Stop moving your chin. You can't talk without doing it, can you?"

"Where are we going to sleep to-night?"

"In the 'Ark,' of course."

"The 'Ark' again! You'll drive me crazy with curiosity to know——"

"Look here!" interrupted Bo's'n Bob. "I'm dubious that you're more'n half a fool. What have I been telling of to you, and what are you giving me? Do you want me to make every thing as plain as moonbeams on a shutter to the cove sitting there?"

"I beg pardon," replied Hunston.

"So you ought. We'll be going when this dance is over. It's a polka—no it ain't, it's a sailor's hornpipe. Look out! You'll see some fun now! The women will face the men, and step it as well as they can. Hurrah! that is the step, fair heel and toe; keep it up!"

The fun now became rather amusing to Hunston, who had never seen any thing like it before.

Jack had pretended to look in another direction, taking no notice of Hunston and his companion.

Yet he had overheard and treasured up every word that had passed between them.

It was about time, he thought, to go outside, and obtain the services of a constable to arrest Hunston.

He was about to leave the "long room" for that purpose, when a band of a dozen sailors marched up the floor.

The hornpipe was just over, the music had ceased.

The newcomers were going to the bar; but when they saw Bo's'n Bob, they stopped short, with a smile on their faces.

"Well, blow me!" cried one who appeared to be their leader. "If that ain't old Bob Turner, my name ain't Peter Simson."

Bo's'n Bob jumped up, and extended his open palm.

"Put it there, Peter," he said. "Why, you've got all the crew of the 'Hilda Varga' with you. When did you reach port?"

"Last night, sonny."

The "Hilda Varga" was a ship in the Norwegian trade, and Bob had made many voyages in her.

He had to shake hands with all the crew, who were his friends of old, and they proceeded to sit down at a table.

They were bound to have drinks with their messmate before they went any farther.

The crew of the "Hilda Varga" were possessed of a thirst difficult to quench, for they had stopped at nearly every public-house since they left the dock, and were still as thirsty as when they began.

Jack being in the way, was rudely pushed on one side by a stalwart sailor.

Rather foolishly, he resented the indignity.

"How dare you touch me!" he exclaimed.

"Who are you?" asked the sailor. "You'd better heave in your slack, or you'll find yourself on your beam ends."

"It would take a better man than you to floor me," replied Jack.

"Is that your idea? Down you go like a bullock!" roared the sailor.

He hit out at Jack, who parried the blow and delivered a counter one on the nose which caused his man to fall heavily.

This roused the tempers of the crew of the "Hilda Varga."

Before he could realise his position, he was attacked by half-a-dozen.

Placing his back against the wall, he fought like a tiger. He kept on knocking the sailors down like nine-pins.

Rows and fights were common enough in the long rooms of Ratcliff Highway a few years ago, though matters have improved considerably since.

The efforts of the missionaries and the increased vigilance of the police have, to an extent, cleansed the augean stable.

It was then the custom, when a disturbance arose, for the waiters to push the crowd aside, seize the offenders, and put them outside on the pavement, using violence when necessary.

The waiters were engaged for their size and strength.

It was rather a difficult thing, on the present occasion, to quiet the crew of the "Hilda Varga."

They had got what they termed their fighting whisky on board.

Jack was knocked about, as was inevitable; his spectacles fell to the ground, his beard was torn off, the whiskers followed, and his wig went awry.

It was all his own fault.

If he had gone away without taking any notice of the sailor's rudness and procured the police he would have caught Hunston in as nice a trap as he could have wished.

Now it was entirely different.

He had lost the game, all through his impetuosity and imprudence.

Suddenly, while he was getting decidedly the worst of it, and really was in danger of being seriously injured, a diversion occurred in his favour.

Two persons pushed their way through the crowd.

They were Harvey and Monday, who had just arrived at "Paddy's Goose" from Oxford, in response to Jack's telegram.

Previously to this, Hunston had recognised Harkaway when deprived of his disguise.

But he did not move or make any remark, hoping that the sailors would knock him about so badly, that he would have to go to the hospital.

He was watching the contest with keen expectation.

Several waiters, and the proprietor of the "long room," had put themselves on Jack's side.

That saved him somewhat from the onslaught that was made upon him.

"He's a spy," whispered Bo's'n Bob. "Look at him now his wig's come off. What did I tell you? But, thanks to me, he has not heard much."

"We must run," replied Hunston. "Some friends of his have come."

"How can you tell?"

"I know them. Off!"

They sneaked away through the crowd, unobserved in the confusion, and were soon lost to sight.

Hunston's good luck once more assisted him.

Without any hesitation, Harvey knocked down a couple of sailors directly he saw that they were attacking his friend Harkaway.

Monday disposed of two others, and the waiters speedily ejected the whole of the crew of the "Hilda Varga."

"Thank Heaven, you have arrived!" gasped Jack, who was scarcely able to speak. "I never had such a bout in my life."

"Are you hurt?" asked Harvey.

"I feel sore. Those fellows punch hard, and it took all my science to keep them at bay. Have you got Hunston?"

"No. Where is he?"

Jack looked round.

"Gone, by Jingo!" he cried.

He sat down and called for some brandy. The proprietor of the place apologised for the annoyance to which he had been subjected; order was restored; the music struck up again; and dancing was resumed, as if nothing had happened,—always the case in these places, even if a corpse is carried away on a shutter, and a manslaughterer taken, red-handed, to the police-station.

Jack related to Harvey and Monday all that had occurred that day since his arrival in the East-end of London.

"It's a great pity you missed him," remarked Harvey.

"What um going to do now, sah?" inquired Monday.

"You not going to be beat, eh?"

"Not if I know it," answered Jack. "I'm always up to date. What do you think, Dick?"

"Up to date, and the day after," replied Harvey.

"Well, I mean to stick to Hunston till I can put him where I can find him."

"Good old Jack!"

"He can not get away," continued Harkaway, "because the London police are watching all the docks, and have telegraphed to every port in the kingdom to have any one-armed man, trying to leave the country, arrested."

"I say," exclaimed Harvey, "what a low place this is! Are you really going to stay here?"

"I selected it because I fancied it would be a likely spot to find Hunston in," answered Jack.

"It is a kind of diggings I don't care about."

"Nor I now. He will not come back now, so we will find a more congenial drum—say some City hotel, near the Bank. We must keep in the City, you know, for I mean to search in every direction, day by day, for the 'Noah's Ark.'"

"What can it be?"

"It is a mystery. Let us leave this place, ask the police if they know what the 'Noah's Ark' is, and where it is to be found, then discover a decent resting-place."

"That am good advice," said Monday. "Sit down to um good supper, have um good bed, and go on a hunt in the morning."

"So say I," replied Harvey. "We have a cunning man to deal with, but we will corner him yet, no fear."

They quitted the gas, the glare, and the noise of the "long room," and proceeded to the police-station.

There they were unable to obtain any information respecting "Noah's Ark."

Such a spot or place was entirely unknown to the police.

A hotel was found in Finsbury Square. Jack got some ointment for the bruises on his face, which were not so bad as might have been expected; and, after writing to Oxford for some portnanteaus filled with clothes, to be sent them, and asking the Dean for an extension of leave, they sat down to a champagne supper.

"I'll give you a toast," exclaimed Jack, raising his glass: "'Confusion to Hunston, and a speedy capture.'"

It was drunk with enthusiasm.

"Bet um golden sovereign, Mast' Jack, we cotch him," said Monday.

"I'm dubious," replied Jack; "but we'll do our level best."

"You can count on me," remarked Harvey.

"I always can, dear boy; you need not tell me that," Jack answered.

Full of hope and determination they retired to rest.

What the morrow would bring forth neither of them could tell.

"Noah's Ark" was a riddle they could not solve.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

"NOAH'S ARK"—FANNY TURNER MAKES HUNSTON DISCOVER
THAT HIS HEART IS NOT DEAD.

HUNSTON and Bo's'n Bob walked quietly away in the direction of Shadwell.

When they put half-a-mile between them and the scene of their late adventure, they paused to light their pipes.

"That was a near shave," remarked Bo's'n Bob.

"I never had a narrower squeak in my life," replied Hunston.

"Fancy that chap Harkaway being got up in disguise, so as you didn't know him. I had my suspicions, though."

"You were right."

"Right!" echoed Bo's'n Bob, "I should think I was. All he heard was that I was going to take you to 'Noah's Ark.' Ha, ha! that will be a hard nut for him to crack."

"Is it a boat, a house, a tavern, or a street?"

"It's a house by the river's side, belonging to my brother, Tom Turner—that's our family name," replied Bo's'n Bob. "He's a dog and bird fancier; he calls himself a naturalist and stuffer. He'll stuff any dead creature for you, from a camel to a chaffinch."

"Indeed!"

"His great trade, however, is in birds, or dogs. He goes out with traps in the fields, catching birds, and he breeds dogs; likewise he sells parrots, cockatoos, and

monkeys. Many a lot have I brought him when I've come from a voyage in the Pacific; he thinks the world and all of me; in fact, he'd do anything for me, if——"

He paused abruptly.

"If what?" asked Hunston.

"If I paid him," continued Bo's'n Bob. "Brother Tom's wonderful fond of money; he's rich, and he keeps on saving up."

"A miser?"

"No, I won't call him that. He's a widower with one child, the prettiest girl—now seventeen—ever you clapped eyes on, captain, and he's a-saving for her."

"Well, you can't blame him for that."

"Not I; he'll take us in if we pay him for the accommodation. The bird-fanciers—and there are a lot of 'em in the East-end—christened his shop 'Noah's Ark,' because it's an old tumble-down, wooden-built house, full of all kinds of animals. I've known him have a bear and a tiger cub at the same time."

"Does his daughter like the animals and birds?"

"She just dotes upon them. It's Fanny's delight to feed and talk to them."

"Is the sign of the 'Noah's Ark' over the shop?" inquired Hunston.

"No; it's just the name the crib has got in the neighbourhood of Shadwell," rejoined Bo's'n Bob.

"Then the police are not likely to track us?"

"Not they."

"Harkaway will be sure to treasure up the words, 'Noah's Ark'; nothing escapes that fellow, confound him!"

"Rest easy, he won't find us. We'll keep dark for a time, send out for our rum and beer, and sit in the front parlour, looking out on the river, seeing the craft go up and down with the tide. When you're tired of that, you can read, or talk to the animals."

"I think I'd rather talk to Fanny," said Hunston, smiling.

"Don't you take no liberty with her, captain," cried Bo's'n Bob. "She's mighty pertickler, and high-spirited as a thoroughbred. 'Vast heaving, you'll have to haul your wind and tack wide, if you offend her. She's a little lady in her way."

"Oh!" replied Hunston, carelessly, "I know how to behave myself."

"I may tell you that she's engaged to a middy."

"Engaged!"

"Yes. He's a chap named Fred Bird, on the Donald Currie line, running from Southampton to the Cape. He comes up on the Sou'-western Railway reg'lar after every voyage; and, being two year older than she, it wouldn't surprise me if they were to get spliced soon."

"May they be happy," answered Hunston, gloomily. "I don't suppose I shall ever go in for so much as a mild flirtation again."

"Why not, captain?"

"My heart's dead."

They walked on in silence.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when they arrived at Tom Turner's "Noah's Ark."

The house was of two stories, long and narrow in its build. The entrance was gained through a garden, the rear facing the river.

In an arbour covered with jasmine and clematis, Tom Turner, the naturalist, was smoking a pipe, with a jug of ale before him.

The night was beautiful, and reflected credit on an English summer; for the air was soft and balmy, the sky studded with stars, and the crescent moon threw its silvery rays on all around.

"Who goes there?" the naturalist cried, as he heard them coming up the garden path.

"Brother Tom," replied Bo's'n Bob. "It's I and a mate of mine, come to give you a turn for a week, if you'll accept a fi'-pun note for our board and lodging."

"Let me see the colour of your money first, and I'll make you welcome, Bob," answered the naturalist. "I'm poor and can't afford to be generous in these hard competitive times."

Hunston felt in his pocket and handed Bo's'n Bob five sovereigns, which the latter gave to his brother.

"That's right; always pay up like a man," said the latter. "Short reckonings make long friends. You can have the first-floor back room; the bed's big enough to hold two. Who's your friend?"

"Mr. Hunston. He's connected with a shipping firm,

and is going to Spain shortly on some business, but he hasn't been very well lately, and wants a week or two for complete rest ; so I fancied I'd bring him down here, as I thought I'd like to see you afore I sail again for furrin parts."

"Well, as I said before, you're welcome, if you bring your welcome with you," exclaimed Tom Turner. "Come inside. Fanny's laid some bread and cheese on the table, and we draw our own beer, if you're inclined that way. If not, you can go to the public, and buy what spirits you want. I can't afford to give any thing away ; times are too hard. Come on."

He led the way to the house.

They followed him into a neatly furnished, clean sitting and dining-room, where a very pretty, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed girl was sitting near a lamp, reading a novelette.

"I was about to call you, father," she said. "But who have you with you?"

"Brother Bob, and a friend, Mr. Hunston by name. Come to stay a week or two with us. Money paid in advance, my dear. Hard times, you know."

Fanny Turner rose and bowed to Hunston, while she shook hands with her uncle Bob.

Hunston jumped to the conclusion that he had never seen such a lovely girl in his life.

He thought he should like to win her for his wife, and take her abroad to share his fate.

What did it matter to him that she was engaged to be married to a young midshipman, named Fred Bird?

She saw his ardent look and lowered her eyes.

They all sat down to supper, and Hunston addressed a few remarks to Fanny, which she replied to in monosyllables.

He could see in a moment that she did not like him, but that made him all the more determined to make her do so.

His heart was not dead

The girl's beauty and innocence galvanised it into life again, as it were, all in a moment.

Neither the naturalist nor his daughter had any idea that Bo's'n Bob had deteriorated from the honest position he once held, and become the associate of doubtful characters.

Nor did any suspicion as to the integrity of his friend enter into their minds.

They were received in a good-natured, open-hearted way, and allowed to run about the house like one of themselves.

That night they slept very comfortably, and were roused at an early hour by the most discordant noises ever heard out of a tropical forest.

The various birds were singing and whistling, the owls hooting, the monkeys screeching, the dogs barking and yelping, and, above all, was the deep growl of a tiger, which was confined in an iron cage.

Hunston was vastly amused at this collection, but he liked best to go into the kitchen and talk with Fanny, while she went about her daily task.

After breakfast, Bo's'n Bob went out, coming back with the daily papers, a bottle of rum, tobacco, and a two-gallon jar of beer, which he took into the parlour.

Hunston was looking out of the window on to the river.

It was nearly flood tide, and the stream was crowded with craft of every description, from the magnificent four or five thousand ton steamer to the humble lighter.

"I thought I'd bring stores for the ship," exclaimed Bob. "I can't abear a dry pipe."

"That is right," replied Hunston. "You are a good caterer; I shall make you purser."

"What a sight the River Thames is!" remarked the sailor. "There's nothing like it in the world for commerce."

"The Clyde and the Mersey come near it," replied Hunston.

"No, they don't," said Bo's'n Bob, closing the door carefully after him. "I'll just keep out some of the noise of the 'Noah's Ark.' Where's the old man?"

"Bird-stuffing in the kitchen."

"Do you know," continued Bob, "that I saw him put the five pounds you gave him last night in a big box, bound with iron clamps, but only secured by a padlock."

"What of that?"

"The box was full up of gold. My eye! what a haul a burglar would have. He'd never want to work any more." His eyes glistened greedily.

"It is very foolish of Mr. Turner," observed Hunston. "I wonder he doesn't bank his money. He ought to be told of it."

"Not by me. He wouldn't thank me for interfering in his affairs. Besides, he'd be riled to think I knew where he kept his money," Bo's'n Bob replied. "It wouldn't surprise me if some night he was found murdered in his bed, and all his cash gone."

There was a peculiar harshness in his voice, which Hunston was forced to notice.

"Why, you wouldn't——" he began.

"Pooh!" interrupted Bob; "did I speak of myself, you fool?"

"I'm glad of that, because I could not be a party to such a crime."

"Wait till you're asked, though I daresay you have done worse than that."

"How do you know?" asked Hunston, nettled.

"Some people talk in their sleep. You do—you did last night when you slept with me; and if half what you said about yourself is true, I shouldn't like to go bail for you to any amount."

Hunston made no reply, but gazed steadily out upon the shipping.

At any other time, he would have wished to be on board one of the outward-bound vessels.

Now he was perfectly content to run any risk on shore, so long as he could be near Fanny Turner.

He had fallen desperately in love with her, and he hoped that the words Bob had just let fall did not bode any misfortune to her or hers.

Hunston resolved to keep a sharp watch on Bob's movements, and prevent him doing any thing wrong if he could.

Then he thought of Fanny's sweetheart, young Fred Bird, the middy, on his way back from the Cape, and he found himself wishing that the ship would sink with him.

If he could but win Fanny, and take her away to a foreign land, where he would be safe how he would try to retrieve and live down his black and sinful past!

The prospect was very alluring, but some thing seemed to tell him it could not be.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE LOVER'S RETURN—A VILLAINOUS PLOT.

WHILE Hunston was looking dreamily out upon the brimming river, thinking how happy he could be with a girl like Fanny Turner for his wife, the postman passed the window.

He stopped, looked up, and smiled at Hunston.

"I've a letter for Miss Fanny Turner, 'Noah's Ark,'" he exclaimed. "This is the 'Ark,' isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Hunston.

"I'm a new hand on the beat, and wasn't quite sure."

"Hand it in."

"Thank you," answered the letter-carrier, as he gave Hunston the epistle through the window.

Looking at the address, Hunston saw that it was written in a boyish hand.

In a corner was inscribed: "Fred Bird, 'The Stirling Castle,'" and the postmark was Southampton.

"From her lover," he muttered; "she told us he was coming up. By heaven! I'll win her, if I have to walk over his corpse."

Bo's'n Bob looked at him curiously.

"What's that?" he asked.

"I was only talking to myself," replied Hunston. "I don't mind telling you that I am in love with your charming niece."

"That isn't much good, she won't return it, because she's got a sweetheart, as you've heard."

"Yes; I know it," said Hunston, sullenly. "Here is a letter from her boy in blue, curse him!"

"Is he coming up, do you think?"

"Of course. What else? His ship's arrived; he's ashore, isn't he? Here's the Southampton postmark."

"You want to win Fanny?" remarked Bo's'n Bob, thoughtfully.

"I do; it would open a new life to me. Away in some quiet, secluded place, with her, how happy I could

be! Ah, me! the sinful part should be redeemed; joy would be mine."

Bo's'n Bob rose.

He walked across the room to Hunston and whispered in his ear.

This is what he said—

"I'll help you if you'll help me. You shall have Fanny, and we will settle Freddy Bird."

"What are your terms?" asked Hunston.

"If there should be a robbery here—such things do happen in the best regulated families, shipmate——"

"Of course—I know that."

"You won't say any thing about me? I'll put the blame on to Freddy Bird. Nobody knows what my brother has got in the iron-bound chest, except me. It is a fortune."

"Well," ejaculated Hunston.

"I mean to have it all. The crime shall be put down to this young midshipman on the Donald Currie line. Do you take my meaning?"

"Yes. It is risky, but it can be done."

"Can! It shall be. I'll rid you of your rival. But hush! I hear footsteps," said Bo's'n Bob.

They became silent, and Hunston rose to his feet.

He saw Fanny Turner entering the room with a little green paroquet on her shoulder, and a couple of toy terrier dogs by her side. All the animals in the "Noah's Ark" loved her.

It seemed impossible for any thing in creation to come in contact with her without being attracted towards her.

So sweet, so pure, so kind was she.

"Have you heard the postman, Mr. Hunston?" she asked. "I have been expecting a letter all the morning."

"He has just given me one for you, through the window, Miss Turner," replied Hunston.

"Many thanks!"

"I was going to seek you. Here it is."

Fanny took the letter from him, and a deep flush suffused her countenance as she saw the handwriting.

It was from Fred.

"Excuse me if I open it," she said.

"Certainly."

Her anxiety to hear from her sweetheart was so great,

that she could not wait to go to a private room to read the contents of his epistle.

In a moment she tore open the envelope and mastered its intelligence.

"Oh, Uncle Robert!" she exclaimed. "You remember seeing Freddy last year?"

"I remember him well, my dear. He's a little swab; but I always thought he had the making of a man in him, and a good officer, too. I gave him some lessons in navigation," replied Bo's'n Bob.

"Yes. He was very grateful to you for your kindness."

"What does he say, my dear?"

"He arrived at Southampton last night in time for the London post, and I may expect to see him here almost as soon as his letter."

"That's good news, sink me, if it isn't. I wonder what he's brought you from South Africa? Something choice, I'll bet. Perhaps an addition to the menagerie."

"He always brings some thing."

"May be an elephant, or a giraffe."

"Go along with your jokes, uncle; as if that was likely. What he will bring me, I expect, is a box of ostrich feathers; for he knows I am fond of wearing them in my hats."

"Ah!" said Bo's'n Bob, "you like to go to church on Sunday morning, and cut the other girls out."

"I want to look nice, that's all. Don't be so rude, uncle," answered Fanny.

"Lor' bless your little heart, can't you take a joke? I know what the female sex is. Their failing is vanity."

Fanny looked archly at Hunston.

"Isn't he unkind?" she asked. "If I try to make myself presentable, he calls it vanity."

"Proper pride, I should term it," replied Hunston. "If you were my sweetheart, I would make you the best-dressed woman in the parish."

"Ah, Fred can't do that; besides, I should not want it. His pay is small," she remarked.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Bo's'n Bob. "Midshipman's pay! Ho! ho!"

"What's that, uncle?"

"More kicks than ha'pence, my dear."

"I have plenty of money," remarked Hunston. "In fact, I made quite a little fortune abroad."

"Where was that?" enquired Fanny, innocently.

"In the Straits Settlements," Hunston replied. "I had an opium factory, near Singapore."

"Did you? Pardon me if I seem rude—did you lose your arm there?"

"Yes, miss. I had a fracas with some Chinese, and got shot. The row was not of my own seeking, it was forced upon me."

"How sad! Are you going back?"

"On the contrary. I intend to settle in England, and enjoy my small fortune with some nice little woman, like you, if I may say so."

"Oh! Mr. Hunston."

"No offence, I hope, Miss Turner."

"You forget, sir, that I am engaged to Fred Bird."

"That is a pity. How I envy him. If he were out of the way, do you think you could care for me?"

"It is impossible," she cried. "Fred will be here directly. To put such a question is an insult!"

"I did not mean it so."

"If you are not more careful, I shall speak to father, and your stay here will not be of long duration."

Saying this, Fanny quitted the room.

Hunston bit his lips with vexation.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Bo's'n Bob.

"There's no chance for you, so long as this snipe of a midshipmite is in the way."

"What can we do with him?"

"Get rid of the fellow. I will help you to clear the path. In me, you have a firm friend. He will be here soon; you must be civil to him."

"How can I?"

"Don't provoke his hostility; leave him to me. You shall have a fair field and favour in plenty. It will be an ironclad to a cockle-shell, my friend."

"Explain yourself, a little more fully."

"As you press me, I will," said Bo's'n Bob. "To-night, when all is still, I mean to rob my brother. I will have his hoard. A portion of it—very small, mind you—I intend to put in this young man's clothes while he is asleep. He shall have articles of jewellery, such as

watches and rings, which I know Tom has got, because I have seen them. When the robbery is discovered, the property will be found on him."

"And you——"

"Oh," interrupted Bo's'n Bob, "I shall hide the rest of the plunder under a tree in the front garden where I can dig it up when I want it in a few days."

"It seems rather a wild plan."

"Not at all. 'Vast heaving, I know what I am about. The police will think young Fred Bird has a confederate."

"Will they not suspect us?" continued Hunston.

"How can they, when the young man will be found to have a part of the property on him?"

Hunston shook his head.

"It's a bad scheme. I don't like it," he rejoined.

"Why not, shipmate?"

"It will get us into trouble, I fear. If it were not for Fanny's pretty face, I would be off to-day; but by heaven, she holds me like a magnet."

"You could not get away yet if you wanted to."

"Do you think so?"

"Your enemy, Harkaway, will have all the ships watched, until he gets tired of it, and gives the chase up as a bad job," exclaimed Bo's'n Bob.

"Perhaps you are right."

"I know I am."

Hunston looked out of the window with a gloomy air.

It seemed as if Fate was always against him of late.

"Look here, shipmate," continued Bo's'n Bob, "you've got to leave every thing to me. When I've made my haul, I'm off, and you can have the girl."

"Suppose she won't have me?"

"That is your lookout. When this midshipmite's in prison, you will be able to make love to her without interference. She will know nothing about your character. Who is going to give her your pedigree?"

Hunston made no reply.

He was afraid that his friend's plot was full of danger, and saw breakers and rocks ahead.

His ship was in a safe haven at present, but how long would it remain so?"

There was no rest for the sole of his foot.

He was a hunted man.

A weary silence ensued.

It was interrupted by a cheery voice in the passage exclaiming—

“Mr. Turner—Fanny—where are you all? The front door is open, and I can’t see any one.”

The next moment a blue-eyed, curly-haired young fellow entered the parlour.

“Hope I don’t intrude?” he said; adding, “Hullo! Uncle Bob, is that you?”

“The very same, Fred,” replied the bo’s’n. “I an’t seen you for nigh upon a year. Give us your fin.”

They shook hands together.

“I’m glad to see you in port again,” continued the old sailor, with a genial air. “Sit down, my hearty. This is my friend, Mr. Hunston; he is staying here for a spell. Mr. Fred Bird—Mr. Hunston. Now you know one another.”

The newcomer bowed politely to Hunston.

“I am glad to make your acquaintance,” he said.

Fanny had heard his voice.

She had been with her father in the menagerie, feeding and attending to the beasts, birds, and reptiles, but with a quick step she rushed into the room, followed by the proprietor of the “Noah’s Ark.”

Fred Bird clasped her in his strong, manly arms.

“Here I am, darling,” he cried, “back again, hale and hearty. How are you, Fan—and you, Mr. Turner? But I needn’t ask, you both look the picture of health and happiness.”

“Thank you, my lad,” answered Tom Turner. “I can’t complain; the world uses me pretty well.”

It need not be said that the young sailor was treated to the best reception that could be given him.

After an excellent dinner, Fred took Fanny on the river in a boat, and in the evening, Tom Turner reached down his old-fashioned punch-bowl from the top shelf of the store cupboard, and brewed a strong concoction of rum, water and lemon.

Everyone was merry; even Hunston threw off his habitual gloom, as he looked at the sweet face of Fanny, hoping that she might yet be his.

But, alas! his fateful presence was to throw a pall-like gloom over that happy home.

The very air was to tremble with horror before the night was over.

Very soon the potency of the rum-punch made itself felt by those who consumed it, not wisely, but too copiously.

Old Tom Turner and Freddy Bird were the first to succumb.

Hunston and Bo's'n Bob very considerably assisted them to bed.

Fanny remained awhile, talking to the two men, when she also retired, leaving them to come when they liked.

She slept on the ground floor, as did Bo's'n Bob and Hunston; old Tom Turner had a room on the floor above, and an adjoining one was given to Fred.

It is important to remember this arrangement, to understand all that follows.

"Will you have another glass?" asked Hunston, pointing to the punch.

Bo's'n Bob shook his head.

"Don't press me. I want to keep cool and know what I am doing of," he rejoined. "Old Tom's gone up top-heavy, and Fred's half seas over. It don't do for us to follow such a bad example."

"When do you commence your operations?"

"About twelve, when all is quiet. It will be all a lark to-morrow, when the robbery is discovered, and part of the missing stuff is found in Fred's clothes. Brother Tom will think he's hidden the rest, or that he has an accomplice; and, that his motive is a wish to marry on an income at once. He will think lots of things."

"I hope it will come off all right," said Hunston.

He sighed deeply, wishing that Bob Turner had never brought him to the old "Noah's Ark."

If he had not seen Fanny's face, he could have gone on his way, uncaring, and uncared for; unloving, and unloved; but she had made such an impression upon him, that he could not forget her.

Suddenly, an old Dutch clock, which had once belonged to Tom Turner's grandfather, struck the hour of midnight.

Bob counted each beat as it chimed forth the hour, remaining motionless until the last stroke had died away.

Holding up his finger, he whispered—"Time!"

Rising from his seat, he extinguished the lamp, and went into his bedroom adjoining.

Hunston, with a palpitating heart, walked after him.

CHAPTER XC.

THE MIDNIGHT CRIME.

As there was nothing for him to do, Hunston got into the double bed, while Bo's'n Bob removed his boots for fear of making any noise and groped his way up stairs.

He was going to rob his too-confiding brother.

All was still as death.

The moon and stars were shining, so that he did not want a light for his nefarious work.

"What a fool I am," mused Hunston. "That girl will lead me to my doom. Yet I want the graces of life. I want a sweet, innocent wife—a child to love and love me. I want the peace of the country, the birds, and the flowers. Why should I be a friendless wanderer all my life?"

Ah! why?

He had only to ask himself the bitter question, to get the crushing answer.

As he sowed, so he must reap.

He had been a bad man, and had chosen the broad path that leads to destruction.

It is not impossible to redeem a wicked past; but, oh! so hard.

Bo's'n Bob was up stairs for about a quarter of an hour.

He came down, went into the garden, and returned to the bedroom,

"Well?" ejaculated Hunston, in an undertone.

"Every thing has gone off A 1, copper-bottomed!" replied Bob Turner, with a grin.

"Have you done the trick?"

"I didn't get all the money. Brother Tom moved uneasily in his bed, and I was afraid; but I obtained a canvas bag full of gold, which I buried just now under the apple-tree in the front garden."

"How did you get at the box?"

"Found the key in his trousers pocket—put it in Freddy Bird's, with a handful of sovereigns and some old jewelry," said Bob.

"Good scheme, that."

"Oh, yes. It will be discovered to-morrow. Brother Tom wakes early. He looks at his miser's hoard the first thing before he comes down stairs."

"What will be the result?" asked Hunston.

"He will have all in the house searched. The property will be found on the little midshipmite, and he will go to prison. Then is your chance with Fanny."

"It looks well enough."

"Don't fear; I'm no fool. Get in closer; I'm going to sleep."

"With a good conscience?"

"Bah! I don't know what that means," answered Bo's'n Bob, with a look of supreme contempt.

In a short time they fell asleep.

How long they slept they did not know, but they were rudely awakened by the voice of old Tom Turner.

He seemed to be greatly exercised in his mind.

"Thieves!" he cried. "I've been robbed! Wake up, all of you. Thieves! Robbers! Help!"

Bo's'n Bob jumped out of bed.

"Now for it," he said.

He hastily slipped his clothes on, and Hunston did the same.

Tom Turner rushed into the room.

"What's up?" asked Bob, rubbing his eyes.

"I've been robbed, brother," was the reply.

"Never!"

"Yes, robbed in the night. My strongbox has been opened, and a part of the contents taken away."

"I did not know you kept money in the house. It's a very foolish thing to do."

"It ought to have been safe enough," replied the old naturalist. "I shall search every one."

"Certainly. Begin with me."

"I will. My own daughter shall not be excepted."

"Go on; you are welcome. Wish I may drop if I've had a hand in it."

"Or I," said Hunston.

"I accuse nobody ; but I mean to find the thief, and punish him."

"Quite right ; that's the style. I'm honest, brother Tom, and should not like to be suspected," remarked Bo's'n Bob.

"My character is above suspicion," observed Hunston.

"I say nothing against nobody," answered the proprietor of the 'Noah's Ark' ; "but I mean having a close search at once."

He began by feeling in the pockets of the men's clothes, looking in and under the beds, moving the furniture, and even the carpets.

Of course he found nothing.

His trouble was all in vain.

"Give me your hands," he said. "You're not in it."

"As if we should be, brother," replied Bob.

"I'm sorry I had to do it."

"Perhaps thieves came in during the night."

"The doors and windows are all fastened safely. Now for my daughter."

Fanny met him at the door.

"Whatever is the fuss about, father ?" she asked.

"I've been robbed in the night, my child ; basely, cruelly robbed !"

"Don't say that."

"I'm on the search. Come with me into your room."

"With pleasure ; but——"

"Not a word," interrupted Tom Turner. "These two are guiltless. You next ; then the one up stairs."

Fred Bird had not been disturbed by the noise.

He was sleeping too soundly.

Though much annoyed and concerned, Fanny submitted to the ordeal with a good grace.

In reality, she was as nervous and frightened as a bird.

She thought that the burglary had been committed by a person or persons from outside the house.

Not for a moment did she imagine that the crime would be fastened upon Fred Bird.

When he was perfectly satisfied that his daughter had not robbed him, old Tom Turner went up stairs.

Nobody followed him.

The three waited for the result in the passage.

Not a word was spoken.

Bo's'n Bob and Hunston were like mutes.

Fanny kept on crying and wiping her reddened eyes.

Presently they heard Tom Turner's voice raised in anger.

He seemed to be furious with passion.

"You young scoundrel!" he shouted "Viper! scorpion! you have robbed me! The money is in your pockets, or part of it. What have you done with the rest? Here is the key of the box. Oh, you villain! You meant to take the remainder another time. Truly, I have nourished a viper. I have warmed you only to sting me, to rob me of my hard-earned money, and to deprive me of my daughter. Get up, you wretch! I will call the police. Revenge—revenge!"

Then the young midshipman was heard.

"How dare you call me a thief?" he asked.

"You are."

"I never stole a halfpenny from anybody in my life."

"Liar and thief!" screamed the old man, hoarsely.

"I have the proofs here—right before my eyes—here!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Look, look! Money, jewellery, key—all from my strong box—in the pockets of your clothes."

"I can not understand it. As heaven hears me, I am innocent!"

"Prove it."

"You prove that I am guilty."

"The proof is before me. Dress while I call a policeman and give you in charge. Oh, you wretched impostor! You wanted to run off with my money and also my daughter!"

"Really, Mr. Turner, you must be mad."

"Ha, ha! we will see about that."

The naturalist threw up the window.

"Police! Thieves! Police!" he yelled.

A constable happened to be passing, and attracted by the vociferous cries, he entered the house.

He walked past those in the passage of the "Noah's Ark" without saying a word, and went up stairs.

Old Turner held Fred Bird by the arm.

"What is it?" asked the constable.

"Robbery in the night, that's what it is," was the reply.

"Who do you allege is the thief?"

"This one."

"Will you charge him?"

"Yes. I'll show him no mercy. Part of my money and jewellery I have found in his clothes. The other he has hidden, and I will lock him up."

The policeman looked severely at Fred.

"You will have to come with me," he said.

"I am innocent," replied the young man, who was trembling violently.

The whole thing had come upon him as a surprise.

He was disgraced, and in the eyes his sweetheart, too.

"Take him away!" cried Turner.

"You will have to come to the station," answered the policeman.

"I know that. Off with him."

"Look here," exclaimed Fred Bird, "I've only just come ashore from a long voyage, and——"

"The less you say, the better," interrupted the policeman, "for it will be used in evidence against you. I'm bound to give you this caution. Come along."

Biting his lips until the blood came, Fred allowed himself to be taken down the stairs.

Fanny was weeping bitterly.

"Oh, father," she sobbed, "you can't think he did it!"

"Didn't I find my property—or a part of what is missing—and the key of my strong box, in his clothes? He meant having the rest before the day was out. Oh, the scamp!" said Turner.

"I shall never believe him guilty."

Fred Bird thanked her with a glance.

"What more proof do you require?" asked Turner.

Fanny made no reply.

The circumstances looked very black against her lover.

"He'll go to prison for some years, I'll warrant. You'll not see him again, my girl, so you had best look out for another lover," continued her father.

"It's a clear case," remarked Bo's'n Bob; "though I'm sorry to say it."

"I'm afraid so," observed Hunston. "Come into the parlour, Miss Turner. You look as if you were about to faint."

"Thank you; I feel so ill," Fanny answered.

She advanced a few paces.

Her pallor increased, she tottered, and fell in a dead swoon.

Hunston caught her in his one arm, and conveyed her to a sofa.

Meanwhile the policeman pushed Fred out of the house, the last look he had of his sweetheart showing him that Hunston was bending over her, and inhaling the perfume of her breath.

This was very galling to Fred ; but retribution was soon to come in a form that Hunston little dreamed of.

The policeman conducted his prisoner to the station, old Turner following him.

A charge of robbery was made.

"I want to ask a few questions," said the inspector on duty.

"As many as you like," Tom Turner replied.

"Have you anyone else staying in your house?"

"My brother Bob and a friend of his."

"What is his name?"

"Hunston."

The inspector looked at some printed papers lying on his desk.

A smile stole over his face.

"Is he a one-armed man?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"That will do ; I take the charge. Conduct the prisoner to the cells. Good-day, Mr. Turner."

The old man went away.

Fred was conveyed to a cell, prostrate with shame and grief.

He had not the pluck to say a word.

This sudden calamity had crushed him.

He knew it was a plot, but how could he vindicate his character and prove his innocence?

Every thing looked as black as night against him.

When the inspector was alone, he began to read a printed bill, which ran as follows :—

"£50 REWARD.—A young, one-armed man, named Hunston, is wanted by the Oxford police. The above sum will be paid to any one who will give information leading to his apprehension. Apply to the officer on duty at the Leman Street Police-station, Whitechapel, London."

This was the bill that Harkaway had caused to be issued.

Up to this time it had not led to any result.

The inspector did not consider that, by the terms of the bill, he was called upon to arrest the man advertised for.

It was simply information that was asked for.

Going to the telegraphic apparatus, with which each police-station is now provided, he clicked the needle, and put himself in communication with Leman Street, White-chapel.

"Are you there?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "Speak."

"I claim the reward of £50 for one-armed man, Hunston, wanted by Oxford police."

"Good. What name?"

"Simpson."

"Noted. Where is one-armed man?"

"Two streets from here, by river side. In house of Turner, naturalist, called 'Noah's Ark.'"

"Right."

"Look sharp; may bolt."

"Watch house."

Simpson rubbed his hands gleefully, as if he concluded that he had done a good day's work.

He was a saving man, and fifty pounds added to his bank account would be very acceptable.

He called a reserve man named Murphy from the reading-room in the station.

"You will go to Turner's, the naturalist's, and watch the house till relieved."

"Yes, Misther Inspector," replied Murphy, who was an Irishman. "An' is it a bird, baste, or fish that I'll be afther watching?"

"Neither."

"Thin perhaps it's the ould man himself. I've always thought he was a recaver of stolen goods."

"It's a man with one arm you've got to look for. If he leaves the house, you must follow him. Don't let him out of your sight. Should he show fight, collar him."

"Indade, an' it's meself that will do that same thing, sorr."

Murphy buckled on his staff and walked to the old house, which he knew well.

Several members of the force in his division were very fond of bird-keeping, and they all dealt with Tom Turner. He had purchased a goldfinch and a skylark from him.

"I'm the man selected for special duty," remarked Murphy, proudly. "The inspector can see that I keep myself up to date. An', bedade, they may well say, 'If you want to know the time, ask a policeman.'"

Arriving opposite the "Noah's Ark," he posted himself in such a position that no one could leave the house without being seen by him.

Tom Turner had returned, and was in his bedroom, overhauling the iron-bound trunk, reckoning up how much he had lost.

It was a large sum.

He bewailed his fate bitterly, moaning over his missing gold and jewellery like the miser he was.

Meanwhile, Bo's'n Bob had been busy in the garden, digging up what he had hidden during the night.

This he concealed in his various pockets, determining to get off as quickly as possible.

He had an idea that in the end Fred would prove his innocence, and that it was not safe for him to stay.

His quick eyes had noticed the form of Murphy outside, and he felt sure that the house was "shadowed," as it is termed.

"I'll be off and away," he muttered. "Where's a good place to lay off for a time? Gravesend, I reckon, will do. I'll go down there. No occasion to say good-bye to Hunston. He's nothing to me. The fool is in love. Ha, ha! I laugh at such weakness."

The rascal was never in love with any one but himself.

"No, no," he added, "no women and children for me to keep. I stand alone. There is only one of me, and I like him. That's a sentiment I could set to music. Wife, indeed! Bah! I should be a boiled owl to think of such a thing."

With a cunning leer and a jaunty air he left the house.

Murphy looked at him, but as he had two arms he did not consider it his duty to interfere with him.

He was clearly not the man wanted.

Hunston did not think of Bo's'n Bob. In fact, he did not care if he never saw him again.

His whole mind was concentrated upon Fanny, and how to win her.

They were still in the parlour together.

She has recovered from her swoon, and was for a moment surprised when she came to herself to find her hand clasped in that of Hunston.

A moment's reflection recalled all that had happened.

"I shall never see him again. They will send him to prison," she sobbed.

"Why did he do it?" Hunston replied. "Shall I tell you? It was a deep plot; he loves another."

"How do you know?" asked Fanny Turner.

"He told your uncle and me so. He laughed in his sleeve, saying that he only came to London to make a fool of you, and so, through you, to rob the old man, your father."

"Is this true? Can it be so?"

"I swear it."

"Then I must think of him no more."

"He is unworthy of any solicitude on your part. Forget him. Let me be your protector in future. Oh, Fanny! if you will be mine, I will promise you every happiness. Dear love, be mine! I have money. We will go to a fairer clime, and your life shall be one constant round of bliss."

"He loves another! Fred cares not for me!" mused Fanny. "Then I shall not care for him. Where is this rival?"

"At Southampton. Forget him, I say. Fly with me now."

"But my father——"

"His money and menagerie are all he cares for. What are you—a daughter or a slave? Do you dress? No. Do you ever go out or have any recreation? No."

"It is true. I will place myself in your hands; do what you like with me. I will trust in your love and your honour," said Fanny.

Hunston's eyes flashed with triumph.

After all, Bo's'n Bob's scheme had succeeded.

Fanny Turner had fallen into his hands like a ripe plum off a tree just stirred by the wind.

Outside the house, on the river front, were some stairs

which led to the water, and there a boatman was always plying for hire.

He was not one of Dibdin's famous "jolly young watermen," who so merrily rowed the great City ladies in days gone by, but a middle-aged man, who kept a wife and family by ferrying people across the Thames, or rowing them to any place to which they wanted to go.

Hunston had remarked this man.

He thought it would be a good plan to hire him to take them some distance down the river.

They could alight at some quiet spot, secure lodgings for the night, and obtain a special licence to be married on the morrow.

Then for a time he would go abroad with his young wife.

He explained his scheme to Fanny, who approved it.

Every thing seemed to be going well for Hunston now.

Fanny put on her hat and jacket, making up a parcel of a few things she would require.

It was not much that she had in the way of clothes, for her father hated to spend money upon her, though he made her work hard enough.

"Wait a moment," said Hunston, when they were all in readiness. "Let me see if the coast is clear."

"My father——" she gasped, nervously.

"Is up stairs."

"If he knew what I was about to do, he would kill me."

"He will forgive you, my own. In time we will come back to him, when his rage shall have passed away. I will look out of the back window to see if the boat is there."

Fanny Turner pressed her hand to her heart.

It was beating so hard that she could scarcely breathe.

Hunston advanced to the window.

He uttered a loud cry.

Looking in upon him was the black, grinning face of Monday.

"Oh, heaven!" cried Hunston.

Dashing past Fanny, the wretched man went to the front door.

Standing on the threshold was Harkaway.

In his hand he held a pistol.

This was a fresh and startling surprise.

Baffled again, Hunston ran to the back door.

Here, to his utter confusion and dismay, was Harvey, armed with a big American bull-dog revolver.

His enemies had found him out in the hour of triumph.

It appeared to him, at that critical moment, that his last hope was gone.

Darting back, he ran into the kitchen.

On the table was a large piece of raw meat weighing several pounds, which Turner had bought to feed his animals with.

He took it up.

As his exit was blocked, Hunston conceived the idea of hiding in the menagerie.

He lost no time in executing it.

Before Harvey could follow him, he entered the large shed where the naturalist kept his collection.

On one side was a capacious wooden cage, with iron bars in front.

It contained two hyenas.

They were in the front of the cage, impatiently barking and laughing, as these creatures will when it is their feeding-time.

Behind was their sleeping-place, partitioned off, lined with straw, and having a door big enough for a man to creep in at.

Hunston hastily opened this cage, and threw the meat to the hyenas.

They eagerly fell upon it, tooth and nail.

He knew they were cowardly creatures, who would no more harm a man than a jackal.

Crawling into the cage, he crept into the sleeping-den, curled himself upon the straw, and remained still.

He had not neglected to close the door.

"Heaven help me!" he groaned; "if I have any right to call upon heaven for help, which I fear I have not. I have forfeited that."

The din made by the inmates of the "Noah's Ark" effectually prevented him from hearing any thing that was going on outside.

Monkeys chattered, birds sang, cockatoos screeched, parrots talked, and snakes hissed.

Tremblingly he awaited the sequel.

It was a strange position to be in, but for the time he was safe.

CHAPTER XCI.

HUNSTON IN DANGER.

JACK HARKAWAY, Harvey, and Monday had been waiting patiently for news of Hunston at their city hotel.

They were sure that it would come in time.

Owing to the fact of his only having one arm, he was a singular man, and could not help attracting notice.

When the inspector of police at Shadwell wired to Leman Street, Whitechapel, the superintendent there at once sent a messenger to Jack.

The latter lost no time in taking a cab, and, with his friends, finding out the "Noah's Ark."

They did not bring any policemen with them.

It was Jack's idea that he should like to capture his old enemy with only the aid of Harvey and Monday.

They had surrounded the house, as we have described.

Jack was just about to enter when Hunston met him in the doorway.

When his unexpected presence caused Hunston to dart back, Jack called to Murphy, whom he thought to be the constable on duty.

"Keep your eyes open, and don't let a one-armed man escape," he cried.

"Them's my orders, sorr," was the reply.

"Knock him down with your truncheon."

"Two hands is better nor one. He won't have much chance, be jabbers!"

"I hold you answerable, also I will reward you."

"It's the rale gintleman yez are, sorr, and I'm sure it's a pleasure to mate with yez. In the force we git more kicks than ha'pence, and it's seldom we see the price of a dhrop of the crather."

Jack did not stay to listen to him.

He hastened into the house, meeting Tom Turner at the parlour door; the latter, having finished his investi-

gations, found that he had been robbed of more than two hundred pounds, and jewellery to a corresponding extent.

This great loss made him furious with rage.

He could have killed his daughter, in his passion, for encouraging, as he thought, Fred Bird to rob him.

"What do you want here, sir?" he demanded. "I don't know you. Are you a customer, or have you come to rob me?"

"To prevent you from being robbed," replied Jack.

"How's that?"

"You have a one-armed man named Hunston in your house?"

"Yes; a friend of my brother Bob."

"He is a villain."

"Say you so?" cried the old man.

"There is a warrant for his apprehension, which I have come to enforce. The house is surrounded—he cannot escape."

"Where is he?"

"I saw him a moment ago."

"You say he is a villain?"

"Of the deepest dye," answered Jack.

"Then perhaps Fred Bird is innocent," mused the naturalist. "I have been hasty."

He reflected that his brother did not bear the best of characters, that he knew absolutely nothing of Hunston, and that he had been probably deceived.

What was more likely than that the two had conspired together to rob him, and fix the crime on the young sailor?

Fanny heard what Jack Harkaway had said, and she experienced a revulsion of feeling.

She had been too hasty in condemning her sweetheart.

Appearances were against him, and she had been prejudiced by Hunston, who had an oily tongue, and could coax when he wanted to.

"You may search this house from top to bottom and take the fellow," said Tom Turner. "He's no child of mine; I have nothing to do with. Brother Bob, too, for what I care."

"Father!" exclaimed Fanny.

"Well, girl, what now?"

"I saw Uncle Bob go away with a bundle in his hand some time ago."

"Ha! that looks bad. We've been harbouring swindlers, I'm afraid. It's hard to talk against one's own relations, but——"

He paused abruptly and shook his head.

"Brother Bob ran away to sea," he added, after a pause. "We couldn't keep him at home; he was always a bad lot. Come with me, sir. We will go through the house after this fragment of humanity, for with one arm he is nothing more."

"He is very desperate; but I have a weapon."

"Go first, if you please. I am old, but I don't want to lose my life yet."

Jack preceded him, and they went over the house and through the menagerie, but without any result.

In the latter they stopped close to the hyena cage.

The animals had finished their meal, and were lying down quietly enough.

"That's funny," observed Turner. "These animals generally make a fine shine about this time. It's the heat of the weather, perhaps, that makes them quiet. Your man isn't here, Mr.— I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Harkaway," replied Jack.

"The question is: Where has he gone? Did you say all the doors were guarded?"

"Yes, and the front window, too. A policeman is outside, as well as my friends. It is singular."

"I call it a lick—a regular lick," replied Turner. "What will you do now?"

"What to do I don't know. Shall I call my friends in, and leave the policeman on guard?"

"You can do that, and hold a consultation. I've been robbed in the night, and I'm upset; my head feels weak. I must lie down. Here, Fanny."

"Father."

"See to these gentlemen. That dizziness I have in my head sometimes has come on. I must lie on my back. See to things generally, will you?"

"Leave it all to me, father," answered Fanny; "but one word before you go."

"What is it?"

"We've been made fools of; I am sure of it. When you are better, will you go and let Freddy Bird out?"

"Ay, ay, girl; let me have a rest, first."

Saying this, the old man, who was dreadfully upset, tottered up stairs, and threw himself on his bed.

His strong box, and what remained in it, was underneath him.

Fanny felt brighter since she had heard what Harkaway had said about Hunston.

It was a complete revelation to her.

She had been standing on the brink of a precipice, and had had as narrow an escape from a life of misery and infamy as a girl could have.

All at once it struck her that her father looked very ill.

There was a wan, cadaverous appearance about him which she had never observed before.

This alarmed her greatly.

He was very old, and at his age could not be expected to be strong enough to stand shocks and excitement.

The events of the night had unnerved him.

Full of tender solicitude, she followed him up stairs.

Having thrown himself on the bed, he had gone off to sleep like a tired child.

She took a chair and sat by the bedside, to be at hand if he awoke and required any thing in a hurry.

Meanwhile, Jack Harkaway had told the policeman, Murphy, to redouble his precautions.

Then he called Harvey and Monday in from the back and front.

"They collected together in the parlour.

All three were ready to swear that they had seen Hunston, and all were equally certain that he had not quitted the house.

Where was he, then?

That was the question which perplexed them, and which they set themselves to solve.

"Perhaps there is some underground cellar in which he is hiding," remarked Harvey.

"Maybe he's got up in um roof, sah," said Monday.

"It would be a pity to miss him, after the police found him so nicely for us," exclaimed Jack. "I am anxious to get back to Oxford, but I can not leave London until this business is over."

"The time for leaving for the summer will soon be here. Commemoration, I mean," replied Harvey.

"And after that, matrimony."

"Yes. It has been a long time to wait, but better late than never."

"You are right. But with regard to business," cried Jack. "How are we to unearth our fox?"

"If that is a riddle, I give it up. Ask me an easier one," laughed Harvey.

Monday was looking out of the window.

Suddenly he uttered a loud cry.

"Hi! yi! yah! ho!" he yelled. "Um gone away, Mast' Jack!"

Jack and Harvey rushed to the window.

It was true.

Hunston had crawled out of the hyenas' cage.

Hearing all still in the house, he had ventured to the parlour door.

There he heard Jack and Harvey deliberating.

Thinking that this was his opportunity, he made his way to the front, and dashed towards the ferry.

Murphy, the policeman, saw him coming.

Before, however, he could seize or stop him, Hunston struck him in the right arm with a clasp-knife, wounding him badly.

He was disabled, and thrown to the ground by the shock.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Harkaway. "He's given us the slip again! After him! After him!"

Monday was out of the window like a shot.

He dashed towards the water stairs.

Harkaway and Harvey followed.

Like a hunted hare, with the greyhounds at his heels, Hunston ran for dear life.

They saw him gain the boat which, fortunately for him, was at the foot of the stairs.

He spoke a few words in a hurried manner to the ferryman, and was immediately rowed into mid-stream.

The boat soon became mixed up with the craft that was going up and down the river.

It was ebb tide, then about half ebb, and Hunston had directed the ferryman to go down with it.

"Um done us again, Mast' Jack," said Monday.

Harkaway bit his lips with vexation.

As he looked in all directions, but could not see another boat.

"Hang it all!" he cried. "Is that the only boat for hire?"

"It seems like it," replied Harvey.

"No, sah. Here one come," said Monday.

A boat was seen approaching the shore.

The waterman, a young and powerful fellow, waved an oar.

"Boat—boat?" he asked.

Harkaway replied in the affirmative.

The boat came to the stairs, they all embarked, and the waterman was instructed to row rapidly down the river.

A sharp lookout for Hunston was kept.

They had lost sight of him, but hoped to come up with him before long.

It promised to be a most exciting chase.

CHAPTER XCII.

THE CHASE.

FEARFUL of being followed by Harkaway and his friends, Hunston urged the ferryman to use his utmost exertions.

He forgot all about Fanny in his hour of peril.

All he wanted, in that moment of dire distress, was to get away.

"Row, man alive!" he cried; "row your hardest!"

"I am rowing all I know how," the man replied.

"You don't take me for a professional, do you?"

"Not likely."

"I've got the rheumatics in my right arm, guv'nor, and in my neck. It's hard work, though I have to keep the ferry for a living."

"Bother your neck!"

"It wants oiling," grinned the ferryman.

"Why don't you do it, then?"

"You do it, and p'raps I'll row better."

"Ah! what do you mean? How can I oil your neck?"

"Do it with gold, master."

"Ah, ah! you want money?" said Hunston.

"That's about the size of it, sir. If you ain't got no oil, mebbe you'll take the oars."

"Can't you see I've only got one arm, you fool? But here, I'll give you five pounds if you'll put the steam on, instead of crawling along like an infernal old crab."

"Show me the colour of your money."

Hunston took the gold out of his pocket and gave it to the man.

"Thank you, captain," said he. "I'll do my best for you. What are you afraid of? Better tell me."

"Enemies."

"Is it police?"

"They've got the police at their back. That is enough for you to know. I want to get away and hide for the night. Do you know any place where you can take me?"

"Yes; down the river."

"How far?"

"Not many miles. It's a crib in Woolwich Marshes—a beershop. They call it the 'Dog Kennel'; stands by itself. Lightermen stop there; a hard crowd they are. You will be safe there, though. It's kept by a friend of mine, a Jew named Absalom Levi."

"Good! that will do," said Hunston.

"It isn't much of a place for a gentleman like you," continued the ferryman; "but I don't think any one would look for you there."

"If it were a pig-stye, and safe, I'd creep into it."

"Oh, it ain't so bad as that; it's clean, and the beer is the best that they make at Romford."

"Why is it called the 'Dog Kennel'?"

"Because it stands in a lonely position, Old Ab, the landlord, was robbed by tramps and pretty near killed once, so he ups to town and buys four jolly, big, fierce mastiff dogs; fit to eat a man they are. He builds kennels for them at the four corners of his shanty and no one comes near him at nights now."

"That will do," said Hunston.

"I was giving you a bit of old Ab's history."

"Keep your mouth shut, and save your breath for rowing."

"I can talk and scull too, that's me, guv'nor," answered the ferryman, quickening his movements.

The boat was going rapidly, for the handsome fee Hunston had given him stimulated the man to greater exertion.

They passed factories, docks, ship-building yards, and wharves as if the river's side were a panorama.

Ships of all nations were to be seen, from the stately ocean steamer, of five thousand tons burden, to the humble barkantine.

"A mile an' a 'arf more will do us," remarked the ferryman.

"Thank heaven for that. I am nervous to-day," Hunston rejoined. "Is the beershop far from the shore?"

"Lays back a few hundred yards, with a causeway of stones leading up to it, or else you'd 'ave to wade through the mud."

"Any thing to eat?"

"Oh, yes. Old Ab's always got a prime bit of cold roast or b'iled beef ready for his customers. Lightermen is werry fond of cold beef and pickles. Lor', guv'nor! it's a sight to see them fellows, after six or eight hours' work on the river, put away the wittles. The grub seems to fly."

They were coming to the Woolwich Marshes, and seemed to be leaving civilisation behind them, for the shore looked wild and bleak.

Hunston did not take much notice of his surroundings.

He fell into a deep reverie.

It was clear to his comprehension, which was always very keen, that Fanny Turner could never now be his.

Harkaway had found him out, and once more turned the tables on him, clever as he was.

It appeared as if they were destined to go through life waging a deadly feud with each other.

Jack had this advantage: he had two solid friends in Harvey and Monday.

They would go through fire and water for him.

As for Hunston, he was alone in the world.

No one ever seemed to attach himself to him for any long time.

It was not a case of, as the poet sings, "All things love thee, so do I," but rather, "All things hate thee."

Many times had he tried to make friends, but his companions—they were no more—proved vicious and worthless.

“Shall I never find rest?” he muttered.

The answer came from the water behind him.

He was startled by a loud cry.

Turning his head, he saw a boat, which contained Harkaway, Harvey, and Monday.

The man who rowed them was in the middle of the boat, Harvey and Monday were in the stern, while Jack stood up in the bows.

He was on the lookout.

The cry which had startled Hunston came from him.

“There he is!” cried Jack. “Give way. Lift her, my lad, and I’ll pay you well.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” replied the waterman. “I’ve been aboard of a man-o’-war, and I’ll show you some pretty work.”

Harkaway’s boat was gaining on Hunston’s minute by minute.

It was clear that in a short time the former would overhaul the latter.

Hunston would then be Harkaway’s prisoner; and once in the power of the police, it was not likely that he would regain his liberty for many years to come.

This thought maddened Hunston.

“Back!” he cried. “Harkaway, I warn you!”

“It’s all right, old fellow. I’ve got you this time,” replied Jack.

“That’s what you think.”

“We are three to one. Surrender!”

“Never! I will die first!” exclaimed Hunston, shouting hoarsely across the water.

It was very warm, and the air was so still and rarefied that a voice could be heard for a considerable distance.

“We mean to have you,” continued Jack. “If you kick like a mule, it will not do you any good. Give up without further trouble.”

“I tell you I will not,” Hunston replied. “By heaven, Harkaway, you shall only triumph over my dead body!”

“Have some sense, and submit quietly to the law, which you have so greatly outraged. If you repent you may find mercy——”

"Stop your cant. I don't want to listen to a second-hand sermon," interrupted Hunston.

Jack made no reply.

It was useless to appeal to Hunston to surrender, for he was evidently desperate.

There was no doubt that the man would fight.

The vengeful expression of his face showed that he was full of it.

Like a stag driven to bay, he was undoubtedly dangerous.

"Are you going to let that boat follow us, sir?" asked the ferryman.

"It's no wish of mine to have it do so, but how the deuce am I to prevent it?" asked Hunston.

"It's no use trying to hide at the 'Dog Kennel.'"

"Are we so near it?"

"Within a mile. I shall have to drift past it. They'll follow us sure, if we land; but perhaps you would like to fight it out there instead of lower down the river?"

"No, by heaven, I'll settle it here!"

Hunston was standing up in the boat, just as Harkaway was.

He drew a pistol from his pocket.

"Stop sculling," he added.

The ferryman rested on his oars.

"Right you are, sir," he said. "If there's murder or manslaughter, it don't matter to me. The authorities can't drag me into it, except as a witness, that's all."

Jack's boat came up rapidly to that in which Hunston was.

They were soon within shooting distance.

"I've warned you," exclaimed Hunston. "If you persevere, you will only have yourself to blame for what happens."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Jack.

"Shoot. That is more than you dare do."

Jack knew that.

He could capture Hunston if he was able, and hand him over to the police, but he had no legal or moral right to shoot him on the Thames.

They were not in a savage country now.

Hunston had him at a disadvantage there.

It was impossible that Jack could fire upon him and

injure him without placing himself within the clutches of the law.

Deliberately Hunston fired at Harkaway, with the intention of either killing or wounding him.

He was so reckless that he cared little which it was.

The shot, owing to a quick movement on the part of Jack, whizzed harmlessly past his side.

Hunston had aimed at the heart, and appeared to be as unconcerned as if he was only shooting wild ducks.

But the bullet found a billet.

The young waterman received the ball in his shoulder.

With a wild cry he threw up his arms.

The movement caused him to drop his oars, which were at once carried away by the tide.

The boat became almost stationary, while that of Hunston went on ahead.

Jack and his friends were helpless in the middle of the river.

They could neither advance nor retreat.

"Ha, ha!" cried Hunston, with a burst of fiendish laughter. "Why don't you come after me?"

"We will have you yet," replied Jack.

"I defy you to do so."

"Don't brag too loudly," Jack said.

"My time hasn't come yet, Harkaway. I feel that I am destined to live in order to annoy you!" Hunston hissed. "I am glad I did not kill you just now."

"You are very kind. May I ask why?"

"Because it is more pleasurable to be a thorn in your side, to thwart you at every turn, and to render your life miserable. Good-bye for the present; we shall meet again."

Hunston waved his only arm.

The ferryman redoubled his exertions.

In a few minutes the boat had shot so far ahead as to be out of sight of Harkaway and his friends.

The latter were extremely annoyed at their ill-luck.

Whenever Hunston seemed to be in their power, or within their grasp, the cunning rascal managed to escape them somehow.

"Are you much hurt?" asked Jack of the waterman.

"I've no use in my right arm, sir," replied the latter, faintly, "and it pains me a good deal."

"Do you live far from here?"

"A goodish way, sir."

They were in a dilemma.

Without sculls or oars, they had no control over the boat.

If they could have got to the shore, they would have assisted the waterman to some house where they would have left him while they got surgical assistance.

What to do they knew not.

"'Pears to me, sare," said Monday, "that we are like the 'possum who found himself up a mighty tall gum-tree, and didn't know how to get down again."

"We must exercise our ingenuity," remarked Harvey.

"Ain't got none of that in stock; sold quite out," replied Monday.

Jack was looking up the river.

They were right in the way of all large craft, and as a mist had begun to rise from the water, it was not easy to see them.

All at once he saw a steamer bearing down upon them.

It was low down in the water, painted black, and worked by a screw.

So quickly do these steamers cut through the water, that they have acquired a peculiar name.

One, however, that is amply justifiable.

The sailors call them, "Silent Death."

They give no notice of their approach, and a collision frequently occurs between them and other boats.

"Look out!" exclaimed Jack, excitedly.

"What is it?" asked Harvey.

"A steamer. We shall be run down Oh, if I could turn the boat's head!"

"You can't."

"Jump for it! Jump, Dick! Now, Monday!"

"You too," said Harvey. Lead the way."

"No, no; I will stand by the waterman," replied Jack.

On came the huge mass.

If there was anyone on the lookout, he did not see the boat.

It was only when the steamer was close to the small craft that the pilot on the bridge noticed it.

He waved his hand.

Something was said by him which was carried away by the wind.

It never reached Jack's ears.

"For heaven's sake, sir, save me!" cried the waterman.

"I will if I can, my good fellow," replied Jack.

"It isn't much I can do with one arm, and bleeding fast, too."

"I know. Cheer up."

"Here she comes, sir."

The dark hull of the "Silent Death" overshadowed them.

It was impossible for them to get out of her way.

A moment of awful suspense ensued.

Harvey and Monday sprang into the river and swam out.

Then there was a crash.

The boat was split up like so much match-wood.

Jack found himself in the water, alongside the steamer.

This was for a brief space only, as she glided on swiftly; and though the pilot had witnessed the accident, he did not stop the ship or so much as dream of lowering a boat to save life.

Jack struggled through the surging water left in the wake of the big ship.

Luckily, he was entirely unhurt.

Anxiously, according to his promise, he looked round for the young waterman, but was unable to see any sign of him.

He had disappeared without leaving any trace.

Jack feared that he must have been hit by the steamer.

After paddling about for some time, he gave up the search.

It was only a waste of time.

"Poor fellow! I would have saved him if I could," Jack muttered.

He struck out for the nearest shore.

This happened to be the Essex side of the river Thames.

As he drew near he was delighted to remark Harvey and Monday standing on the land.

They were shouting and beckoning to him.

In a few minutes he was by their side, shaking hands with them.

None of the three were any the worse for their immersion.

"That was a narrow squeak, sare," said Monday.
"Very nearly go to Davy Jones' locker then."

"Where's the waterman?" asked Harvey.

"Poor chap!" answered Jack. "I'm afraid he's past praying for. I stuck to the boat for his sake till she was struck."

"Perhaps he got knocked on the head."

"No doubt. He must have sunk like a stone. I reckoned that he could keep himself afloat for ten minutes with one arm, if not longer."

"It was kind, and plucky of you."

"Never mind that. I'm vexed that the poor chap should come to such grief in our service."

"So am I," replied Harvey; "but it can't be helped. What are we to do now?"

"Take a walk along these marshes. Being summer time, they are hard. We shall soon dry our clothes. When we come to a tavern, we will refresh the inner man, and get back to town the best way we can," said Jack.

"Agreed; that will do."

"Um very good advice that," remarked Monday; "specially that about refreshments. Thames mud gets down this child's throat, and don't taste over nice either."

"You shall have something before long."

"I'd like lilly drop of something to washa mouf out, sare," grinned Monday. "Always keep de debble out of um inside."

"How do you do that?"

"Him only come in when um inside is empty. Keep him full up to the bung and no debble able to get in."

"A very good plan," replied Jack.

They walked along the marshes, the sun dried their wet clothes in a remarkably short space of time.

It was a lovely day, and under other circumstances they would have enjoyed their walk.

As it was, they were thinking how Hunston had beaten them, and how they would have to go back to Oxford acknowledging their defeat.

They had no more time to spare.

Commemoration would take place in a few days.

It was necessary that Jack and Harvey show themselves at St. Aldate's.

"Say, Massa Jack!" Monday exclaimed.

"What now?" asked Harkaway.

"See that old shanty over there?"

"Yes; it looks like a wooden house."

"That's jus' what it is, sare."

"Nothing extraordinary about it, is there?"

"Not 'xactly 'xtro'nary; but Monday got very good eyes, Massa Jack, and he see something written on de side."

"What is it?"

"'Fine ales sold here. Meals to be had within. Cold meat and eel-pies always on hand.' Oh, golly! how I'd like to eat a eel-pie now or pick a sweet old ham-bone!"

"Good enough!" cried Jack. "Press on, boys."

"Soon," said Harvey, "we shall be dipping our beaks in the foaming pewter."

"In the language of the poet, 'you bet,'" replied Jack.

The prospect of refreshment after their immersion in the muddy Thames put fresh spirits into them.

They increased their pace, and rapidly neared the solitary house, for it stood entirely alone.

CHAPTER XCIII.

A SURPRISE.

As they approached the little inn, whose licence only permitted the sale of beer, they saw a boat rowed up to a causeway leading to the house.

A man stepped out of it.

To their amazement it was Hunston.

This was indeed a surprise.

The recognition was mutual.

As soon as Hunston remarked Harkaway, Harvey, and Monday, he muttered an imprecation.

Stepping back into the boat, he gave some orders to his boatman, who instantly shot out into the stream again.

Hunston had come to the "Dog Kennel," as the ferryman called the place, expecting to rest there.

"A boat!" cried Jack. "If I only had a boat, I'd tackle him single-handed!"

"He would shoot you," Harvey replied.

Hunston laughed.

"As you fellows have taken possession of that side of the river, I shall go to the other. It will be useless to follow me, for, in spite of all your clever precautions, I promise you that I shall leave England to-morrow."

"It will be a good riddance," replied Jack.

"No, you will not be rid of me, for I will baffle you in all your schemes wherever you go."

"How will you know my movements?"

"I have paid spies. Beware of me!"

These were Hunston's last words.

He was rowed rapidly across the river by the ferryman.

Harkaway and his friends went into the beer-house and refreshed themselves, after which they were directed to a railway-station, and returned to London.

We may here mention that Bo's'n Bob was never seen in London again.

Old Tom Turner, of the "Noah's Ark," liberated Fred, whom he felt sure was innocent of the crime imputed to his charge.

Fred Bird married Fanny, gave up the sea, and settling down at the "Noah's Ark," became a naturalist, bird-fancier, and stuffer, being of much use to his father-in-law.

* * * * *

Jack Harkaway, Harvey, and Monday returned to Oxford directly they were sure that Hunston had slipped through their fingers.

There was no more to be done.

They were not to blame, for they had worked hard to ensure his capture.

At all events, they were rid of him.

Where he would turn up next was a question with which they did not trouble themselves.

It was pleasant, after all they had gone through, to be again at the dear old 'varsity.

The remainder of the term passed very quickly.

Mr. and Mrs. Bedington and Emily, with Mrs. Travers, came up for Commemoration.

Oxford was *en fête*.

On Show Sunday they all walked under the trees in the Christ-Church meadows, with Harvey and Hilda.

At last all was over.

Hilda and Harvey accepted an invitation to stay at Mr. Bedington's house.

The day fixed for the three marriages was Thursday, and after the breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway, and Mr. and Mrs. Harvey, were to start for the Continent, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Matabella.

The wedding was a grand affair.

After breakfast, Mr. Bedington took Jack aside, while Emily had gone with Hilda to dress for the journey.

"Now, my dear boy," said Mr. Bedington, "I want to know if you have finally chosen a profession?"

"Yes," replied Jack; "with your permission, I will go into the army."

"So be it. Your career has been a brilliant one hitherto, and I am sure you will shine in any capacity."

"I should like to go into the Blues," said Jack, "for a year or two; you know I could change into another cavalry regiment if there was any prospect of active service."

"We will talk about that when you come back," continued Mr. Bedington, "and all I have left to say is, may you be happy."

Mrs. Bedington came up, and squeezing Jack's hand, said, "Heaven shower its choicest blessings upon you, my child!"

Jack felt indeed that life was opening brilliantly before him.

"Here are the girls," cried Mrs. Bedington, hearing a rustling of silk dresses on the stairs.

Hilda and Emily were together.

"Are you happy, dearest?" whispered Hilda.

"Oh, so happy; I can scarcely believe it's true," answered Emily.

Ada was laden with wraps and parcels.

Monday was bustling about, with hat-boxes, and fishing-rods, and various other articles.

"Now, then, Monday, look alive!" cried Jack; "we shall miss the train."

"Um do as fast as um can, sare," answered Monday.

"Somehow um feel rather funny about the head this morning."

"So do I," muttered Jack; "it's getting married, I suppose."

Harvey gave Hilda his arm, and Jack took Emily. Then they got into the carriage.

Monday and Ada were in the rumble behind.

"Hurrah! Give them a parting cheer," cried O'Rafferty. "Hurrah! It's a swate thing to get married. Hurrah! hip, hip, hip! Now for the shoes; pitch away."

"See me pick off Monday," Tom Carden exclaimed.

A perfect shower of old shoes flew after the carriage as the mettlesome horses dashed away down the avenue.

The newly-married couples were fairly on their way to Paris, which they expected to reach during the following day.

And thus ends Jack Harkaway's career at Oxford.

Jack Harkaway's career as an officer in the army must form another portion of our story, and we trust our numerous readers will take as kind an interest in him after his marriage as they have done hitherto.

We promise that he shall be the same Jack Harkaway as they have hitherto found him.

Amidst various perils in barracks, in the drawing-room, in the hunting-field, on the field of battle, with war raging around him, and death scattering his foes and friends, and among the fierce brigands of the mountains, his cool head and steady pluck will not desert our type of the genuine Boys of England.

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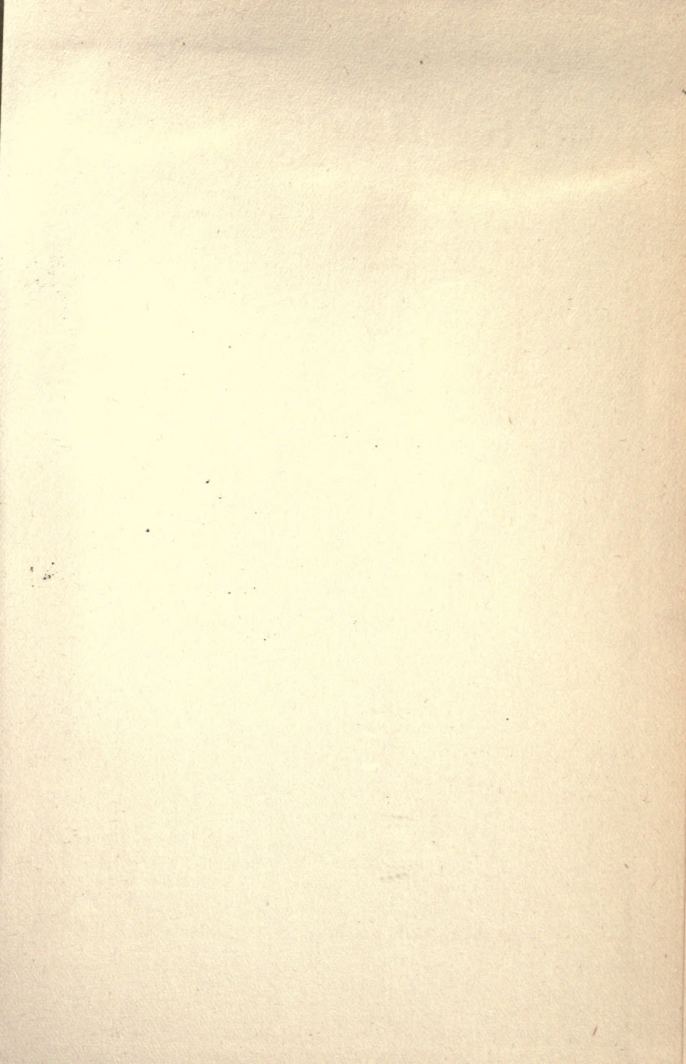


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